DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 373 416 EA 026 025

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TITLE School-Based Early Childhood Centers: Secrets of Success from Early Innovators.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, OR. Child, Family, and Community Program.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 94
CONTRACT RP91002001
NOTE 117p.
AVAILABLE FROM Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Development; *Child Development Centers; *Early Childhood Education; *Early Intervention; Family School Relationship; Prevention; School Community Programs
IDENTIFIERS *School Based Early Childhood Centers

ABSTRACT

School-based early childhood centers have the potential for responding effectively to a broad range of child and family needs and to society's demands for more effective schools. They have four defining features: (1) implementation of quality programs and developmentally appropriate practices for young children through age eight; (2) families as partners in schooling; (3) active involvement with and responsiveness to community needs and resources; and (4) transition services, including a school-based commitment to educating preschoolers. This report describes the progress that six sites in the northwestern United States, selected as "early innovators," made toward becoming a fully formed early childhood center during 1991-93. The schools included: Centennial Early Childhood Center, Portland, Oregon; Mary Harrison Primary, Toledo, Oregon; Nome Elementary School, Nome, Alaska; Ponderosa Elementary School, Billings, Montana; South Colby Elementary School, Port Orchard, Washington; and Tendoy Elementary School, Pocatello, Idaho. Data sources included interviews and classroom observations, documents, principal reports and interviews, and a school survey. Findings indicate that the six schools gave the most consistent and comprehensive attention to implementing a quality program based on developmentally appropriate practice. Besides the above component, the schools uniformly rated the following program elements as very important: a focus on language and literacy, use of a variety of authentic assessment techniques, school leadership for innovations, family involvement, and school board support for change. These findings suggest that successful restructuring efforts must occur simultaneously in a number of components in order for changes to accumulate into a sustained effort. Further recommendations are offered. Appendices contain site profiles, a self-diagnostic survey, and a data matrix of the components by site. (LMI)

THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED 373 416

SCHOOL-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS:

SECRETS OF SUCCESS FROM EARLY INNOVATORS

Janet L. Jewett
Aphra Katzev

November 1993

Child, Family, and Community Program
Helen Nissani, Director

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Acknowledgements

This report has resulted from the combined efforts of a number of people who gave generously of their time and efforts. Representatives from the six early childhood sites included Judy Evans, formerly of Ponderosa Elementary School; Barbara Fields and Janay Kneeland of Mary Harrison Primary; Dave Newton, formerly of Nome Elementary School; John Lindley, Brian Pickard, Joan Mott and Ann Warren of South Colby Elementary School; Judy Thomas of Tendoy Elementary School; Barbara Velander and Doug Cook of Centennial School District; and Anita McClanahan and Dell Ford of the Oregon Department of Education.

The report could not have been completed without the efforts of NWREL's Child, Family, and Community Program staff, including Wendy Garcia, Louise Downing, and Carol Rutherford.

Finally, thanks go to the teachers, children, and families who opened their doors and their hearts to us so that we could learn from their efforts to learn and grow in public school early childhood settings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School-based early childhood centers have the potential for responding effectively to a broad range of child and family needs and to society's demands for more effective schools (Jewett, 1991). These centers incorporate a knowledge base from early childhood research and proven developmentally appropriate practices into a child-centered program that emphasizes partnerships among families, schools, and communities. Such high-quality programs are preventive and offer a strong foundation for beginning and continuing school success for all children and their families. In quality early childhood centers, all young children encounter education and support practices which enable them to actively engage in learning and development processes aimed at helping them reach their full and unique potential. In addition, such centers work collaboratively with family caregivers and community partners in ways which build upon the ongoing capacity of each to respond effectively to young children, both individually and collectively.

The four defining features of school-based early childhood centers as identified through the project on which this paper is based are: (1) implementation of quality programs and developmentally appropriate practices for young children through age eight, which has been further broken down into the five areas of curriculum, school context, assessment and outcomes, staff development and support, and school structures; (2) families as partners in schooling; (3) active involvement with and responsiveness to the resources and needs of the community; and (4) transition services, including a school-based commitment to educating preschoolers in the community either onsite or in collaborative relationships with preschool providers.

A fully formed early childhood center, according to the definition being used by the School-Based Early Childhood Center Project described below, will include aspects of all components. The definitional framework utilized by the project includes further elaboration and clarification of these components.

The School-Based Early Childhood Centers Project

To chart the change process and learn how early childhood centers could be developed effectively within the public schools, the Child, Family, and Community Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) identified a number of regional "early innovators" in the five Northwest states (Jewett, 1991). A regional survey was conducted and partnerships were established with six Northwest sites to provide case studies as the staff at each school grappled with restructuring their programs. Representatives from each of these schools met periodically over the course of two and a half years to define and discuss the early childhood center concept, reflect on the changes they were making, and offer their experiences to the group for analysis.

This report:

- Describes the progress each of the six sites has made toward becoming a fully-formed early childhood center
- Applies a definitional framework developed by NWREL's School-Based Early Childhood Centers project to the site descriptions
- Analyzes the resulting findings for the understanding they can contribute to early childhood restructuring efforts

The report presents case studies describing the characteristics of the six early childhood centers as they had evolved by early 1993. These case studies were based on at least one site visit by a NWREL representative, including interviews and classroom observations, document review, principal report and interviews, and survey responses. The four defining features of school-based early childhood centers highlighted above, are used to organize the site descriptions.

Three levels of implementation were identified for the components at each site: "emerging," "developing," and "applying." Programs with components which were rated as "emerging" were those with few examples of application of that particular component. "Developing" components were those which were being applied sporadically. A program that was "applying" the component demonstrated more consistency across the program as a whole and tended to demonstrate evidence of a formal, articulated policy regarding that component. For example, a school applying the mixed-age component might place children in mixed-age classrooms, assign children to "family" groupings at lunch periods, or use some other systematic way of ensuring children's exposure to consistent mixed-age groups over time.

These criteria and their application to the site descriptions were developed and utilized by the representatives from the sites during a meeting conducted in October 1993. At this meeting, the descriptions of the various components for each site were abstracted and presented to a committee for review. Each committee reviewed the descriptions of the components for all sites and applied the rating system to them. The ratings were then reviewed by the group as a whole.

Findings

A matrix summarizing the findings across programs offers a sense of the scope of the restructuring efforts and an awareness of both those components which early innovators have implemented effectively and those components which represent a continuing challenge. Findings include:

- These six schools, chosen as "early innovators" of the concept, demonstrated a wide variety of strengths as well as a range of innovations reflecting sound early childhood principles and practices. The first component in NWREL's framework, implementation of a quality program based on developmentally appropriate practice, was the one which had received the most consistent and comprehensive attention from each of these sites.

- Program elements uniformly rated as very important by participants of all six sites included: (1) using developmentally appropriate practices, (2) emphasizing language and literacy, (3) using a variety of authentic assessment techniques, (4) school leadership for innovations, (5) family involvement in children's schooling, and (6) school board support for change.

- All sites indicated that they would appreciate additional help with information on early childhood practices and technical assistance on developing more fully formed components. Since time for planning and implementation was also an issue, a commonly expressed need was to receive help with time management strategies and techniques. The following specific needs have been identified:

    1. increased awareness of the need for training and materials regarding cultural diversity and nonsexist values
    2. access to resources for provision of comprehensive care to children and families
    3. new assessment methods and techniques, especially those adopting a "continuous progress" approach
    4. more release time for staff to pursue restructuring and development efforts
    5. increased awareness of and resources for all aspects of family involvement and support
    6. increased awareness of and resources for increasing continuity between preschool and elementary programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from this review suggest that successful restructuring efforts must occur simultaneously in a number of components in order for changes to accumulate into a systemic and sustained effort. The six sites under study made systematic changes in classroom, grouping, and assessment practices, developed new approaches to staff development and leadership, altered their relationships with families and community

members and organizations, and created new linkages with preschool service providers. They learned a great deal about the processes and politics involved with public school change. Their challenges and problems can offer useful information to others just embarking on such efforts. Recommendations are:

- Change efforts should be targeted in more than one component at a time. Changes in classroom practice reverberate to assessment practices and to relationships with families and community, who may challenge and oppose efforts they are not included in and members do not understand.

- Inclusion and collaborative processes are valuable facilitators of sustained, systemic change. These inclusive, collaborative practices must occur within the school as well as between school staff and other collaborators.

- Schools involved in early childhood restructuring show continuing and critical need for support in reconceptualizing relationships and policies regarding family members.

- Schools can benefit from learning more about the services available in their communities and participating in efforts to increase or improve those services.

- Training and materials for gender and cultural appropriateness are needed.

Additional areas of needed research and development resources include:

- Resources on application of a resiliency model to schooling, including means for establishing and maintaining high expectations and ensuring success and accomplishment for each child

- Resources for implementing assessment practices which are authentic and encourage appropriate participation by children and their families

- Resources for new techniques for communicating with and empowering families

INTRODUCTION

School-based early childhood centers have the potential for responding effectively to a broad range of child and family needs and to society's demands for more effective schools (Jewett, 1991). These centers incorporate a knowledge base from early childhood research and proven developmentally appropriate practices into a child-centered program that emphasizes partnerships among families, schools, and communities. Such high-quality programs are preventive and offer a strong foundation for beginning and continuing school success for all children and their families. In a quality early childhood center, all young children encounter education and support practices which enable them to actively engage in learning and development processes aimed at helping them reach their full and unique potential. In addition, such a center works collaboratively with family caregivers and community partners in ways which build upon the ongoing capacity of each to respond effectively to young children, both individually and collectively.

Systemic change is inherent in the task of restructurturing early elementary public schools around the principles which define quality early childhood programs. These definitions of and approaches to quality have been developed and researched through disciplines primarily outside of public school education. Successful early childhood centers are based on studies of young children's learning and development which suggest qualitatively different roles for teachers, different modes of organizing groups and structuring learning opportunities, and different ways of interacting with families than those traditionally adopted by public school educators. Applying such principles to the public school system, then, is not simply a matter of adding to existing programs. Instead, establishing comprehensive early childhood centers requires altering the very nature of the educational system. Thus, change, rather than refinement or augmentation, seems to be essential to the task of implementing an early childhood center. Surveys of Northwest educators who have been successfully engaged in the process of developing early childhood centers in public elementary schools over the past few years support this claim and provide descriptions of comprehensive shifts in educational systems that coincide with their efforts to work toward quality early childhood programming (Jewett, 1992).

The School-Based Early Childhood Centers Project

To chart the change process and learn how early childhood centers could be developed effectively within the public schools, the Child, Family, and Community Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) identified a number of regional "early innovators" in the five Northwest states (Jewett, 1991). A regional survey was conducted which included intensive interviews with approximately 35 educators and concerned stakeholders regarding public school innovations related to early childhood principles and practices. Partnerships were established with six Northwest sites to provide

case studies as the staff at each school grappled with restructuring their programs. Representing both larger and smaller schools and a range of rural, suburban, and urban locations, the six sites were:

Centennial Early Childhood Center	Portland, Oregon
Mary Harrison Primary	Toledo, Oregon
Nome Elementary School	Nome, Alaska;
Ponderosa Elementary School	Billings, Montana
South Colby Elementary School	Port Orchard, Washington
Tendoy Elementary School	Pocatello, Idaho

Representatives from each of these schools met periodically over the course of two and a half years to define and discuss the early childhood center concept, reflect on the changes they were making, and offer their experiences to the group for analysis. Representatives from the Child, Family, and Community Program at NWREL made site visits to observe first-hand the restructuring efforts and to assist in developing documentation of the innovations. A quantitative survey, described in more detail below, was developed and administered by each site to clarify shared perceptions of innovations among local stakeholders. Project representatives met again to review these shared perceptions and assist in summarizing their contributions to increasing the knowledge base regarding school-based early childhood center change efforts.

The purposes of this report are to:

- Describe the progress each of the six sites has made toward becoming a fully-formed early childhood center
- Apply a definitional framework developed by NWREL's School-Based Early Childhood Centers project to the site descriptions
- Analyze the resulting findings for the understanding they can contribute to early childhood restructuring efforts

Components of School-Based Early Childhood Centers

An earlier report (Jewett, 1991) identified four defining features of school-based early childhood centers. The identifying characteristics of each component were developed from a review of a full range of research findings regarding effective practices in early childhood education programs (Jewett, 1991, 1992). The National Association for Educating Young

Children's (NAEYC) guidelines for early childhood programs provided significant conceptual input into the identification of these components (Bredekamp, 1987). The four defining features are:

(1) implementation of quality programs and developmentally appropriate practices for young children through age eight, which has been further broken down into the five areas of curriculum, school context, assessment and outcomes, staff development and support, and school structures; (2) families as partners in schooling; (3) active involvement with and responsiveness to the resources and needs of the community; and (4) transition services, including a school-based commitment to educating preschoolers in the community either onsite or in collaborative relationships with preschool providers.

A fully formed early childhood center, according to the definition being used by the School-Based Early Childhood Center Project, will include aspects of all four components. The definitional framework utilized by the project includes further elaboration and clarification of these four components, as described below:

I. Implementation of quality programs and developmentally appropriate practices for young children through age eight.

This component incorporates functions and concerns of primary importance to public schools serving preschool and early elementary students. Because of the range of scope and intensity of interest in this aspect of the early childhood center, this component was found to incorporate five subcomponents. These are:

Classroom curriculum

The curriculum in an early childhood center is structured around developmentally appropriate practices. Classroom practices are adapted to reflect both the age and individual needs of the children. Curriculum content is integrated, and learning activities reflective of children's interests are thematically related. Children are actively involved in learning and decisionmaking. A strong emphasis is placed on language development and the successful emergence of literacy skills. Finally, cultural diversity and nonsexist values are consistently reflected in a variety of age-appropriate materials and activities.

School context

The school organizes the groups and settings in which children are placed in ways which focus on continuity and inclusiveness. In such schools, classrooms are structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds, and class groupings afford children of differing ages regular opportunities to learn together. The school systematically offers opportunities for the development of caring relationships among children and adults that are sustained for more than one school year. Finally, comprehensive services are available for children and their families, including provisions and support for health, nutrition, safety, and extended care needs.

Assessment and outcomes

The assessment of children's progress is a critical feature of an early childhood center. In such a program, children actively participate in and reflect on assessment practices related to their school progress, and parents have regular opportunities to participate in assessing their child(ren)'s school progress, as well. Desired outcomes are designed to set high expectations for each child in the school, and practices are adopted that ensure each child experiences success and accomplishment. A variety of assessment techniques based on clearly stated goals and outcomes that provide a balanced, holistic, and authentic understanding of each child's progress are used on a regular basis.

Staff development and participation

Staff in the early childhood center are directly involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement that includes information about shared values and expectations for the school's purpose, function, and range of appropriate practices. Opportunities are consistently available for inservice training on developmentally appropriate practices and early childhood education. Regular opportunities are available for school staff to work together and collaborate to develop a broad understanding of early childhood practices. Finally, and critical to the success of a school-wide restructuring effort, school staff exercise professional flexibility and are willing to attempt to change their practices when appropriate.

Support structures

Schools which implement this approach provide opportunities for staff to participate in site-based decisionmaking regarding program components that will have an effect on their classroom practice. Performance evaluation standards are consistent with the goals, philosophy, and identified practices being implemented. Resources for making needed changes are available, including adequate time for planning, collaboration, and program implementation. School leadership is strongly supportive of efforts for innovations.

II. Family Involvement and Support

Families in the early childhood center have opportunities to contribute ideas, resources, and time to curriculum design and implementation and are expected and encouraged to become involved in their child(ren)'s education at school. Comprehensive family support services are offered through parent education and linkages to needed human services. In addition, broad-based decisionmaking opportunities are afforded to families to contribute to program design and operation.

III. Community Involvement and Support

Collaborative relationships are critical to the success of the early childhood center. Relationships between the school and other human service providers provide access to a comprehensive network of resources. Opportunities are available for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decisionmaking, and community members contribute ideas, resources, and time to school and classroom processes. Finally, it is essential that the school board and community are supportive of needed changes that the school has identified.

IV. School-based Preschool-to-School Transition Services

The final component of the early childhood center involves the commitment of the school to providing preschool services either onsite, or through the collaboration and support of community providers. Opportunities exist for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training. School staff work collaboratively across age levels to coordinate curriculum processes and ease transitions for children in developmentally appropriate ways. A comprehensive child care program is coordinated through the school, and school staff assist children and families in making transitions into and across school levels.

Based on these components and indicators, NWREL designed *The School-Based Early Childhood Center Self-Diagnostic Survey* to help schools assess their progress in the development of early childhood centers (see Appendix C). The survey focuses on systemic changes in the restructuring process. While the instrument remains in the developmental stage, it provides valuable information about the importance and degree of implementation of the various components from the perspective of the participants. The survey contains a cluster of four or five items related to each of the four components.

SITE PROFILES

The following case studies describe the characteristics of the six early childhood centers as they had evolved by early 1993. These case studies are based on the following information sources: at least one site visit by a NWREL representative, including interviews and classroom observations; a document review; a principal report and interviews; and survey responses. The four components of the framework, as described above, are used to organize the site descriptions. Survey results from each site are included for each of the four components. Each item on the graphs presenting findings is both numbered and labeled. These numbers and labels coincide with the number and text of individual items on the survey form (Appendix C).

OVERVIEW OF SITES: THE MATRIX

A matrix based on the descriptive case study profile of each site provides an analysis of the progress of each site toward a fully formed program. Three levels of implementation were identified: "emerging," "developing," and "applying." Programs with components which were rated as "emerging" were those with few examples of application of that particular component. For example, in the area of opportunities for children to work in mixed-age groups, an emerging program may have had very few such opportunities which could include a buddy program between a first grade and a fifth grade class. "Developing" components were those which were being applied sporadically. At this level, a school working toward implementation of mixed-age groupings, for example, might have contained a few such classrooms at several age levels, with other classrooms in traditional groups organized by grade level. A program which was "applying" the component demonstrated more consistency across the program as a whole and tended to demonstrate evidence of a formal, articulated policy regarding that component. For example, a school applying the mixed-age component might have placed children in mixed-age classrooms, assigned children to "family" groupings at lunch periods, or used some other systematic way of ensuring children's exposure to consistent mixed-age groups over time.

These criteria and their application to the site descriptions were developed and utilized by the representatives from the sites during a meeting conducted in October 1993. At this meeting, the descriptions of the various components for each site were abstracted and presented to a committee for review. Each committee reviewed the descriptions of the components for all sites and applied the rating system to them. The ratings were then reviewed by the group as a whole.

The matrix in Appendix C provides a quick, comprehensive look at the types of progress these sites have made in the past three to five years in the course of their restructuring efforts. An examination of the overall matrix offers a sense of the scope of such efforts and an awareness of both those components which early innovators have implemented effectively and those components which represent a continuing challenge.

Recommendations for future resource development can be based on the findings of this type of analysis.

OVERALL IMPORTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPONENTS

The results of *The School-Based Early Childhood Center Self-Diagnostic Survey* indicated that all participating schools considered elements under each of the eight components to be important to the successful implementation of an early childhood program. Participants could rate each element as very important, somewhat important, or not important. None of the mean ratings fell below the "somewhat important" category.

Elements uniformly rated as very important by participants at all six sites included: (1) using developmentally appropriate practices, (2) emphasizing language and literacy, (3) using a variety of authentic assessment techniques, (4) school leadership for innovations, (5) family involvement in children's schooling, and (6) school board support for change.

Classroom curriculum

The six sites demonstrated consistent success in their restructuring of the classroom curriculum to reflect developmentally appropriate practices. All six sites had adopted a whole-language approach and an integrated curriculum for the primary grades. Several had extended these practices into the intermediate grades. But while all the schools recognized the importance of reflecting cultural diversity and nonsexist values in materials and activities, only a few had a formal mechanism for ensuring that curriculum materials and activities supported this goal. This area is one which calls for more attention in the early childhood restructuring process.

School context

None of the schools used ability grouping to structure classrooms. Instead, each classroom is heterogeneously arranged to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds. A "push-in" model was common, with special services available within the classroom. Many sites continued to maintain resource rooms, however, to meet an occasional individual's needs "for a quiet place to work," or to cope with scheduling conflicts when a specialist's time was limited. All sites were characterized by cooperative learning and peer tutoring across grade levels.

While all sites had a uniformly strong spirit of nurturing children's development and taking pride in their accomplishments, those schools that offered multi-age groupings were more able to sustain these caring relationships for more than one year because children remained with the same teacher over a period of time. Those schools that had not yet moved to multi-age groupings recognized that developing a curriculum for mixed-age classes is a first priority. Some schools found support for multi-age classes limited and realized that education about the value of this type of grouping was essential.

All sites sought to offer comprehensive services to children and families, but some had to reduce services as a result of recent changes in funding.

Lack of financial resources for services and shortage of available time to build relationships with providers were routinely cited as barriers to providing comprehensive services.

Assessment and outcomes

Although all six sites used portfolio and other authentic assessment techniques to document progress, student participation in the assessment process was often limited to student decisions on work to be included in the portfolio. Similarly, parent participation in assessment was often limited to conferences, although two schools used home visits as a vehicle for parent involvement in goal-setting and assessment. Continued support and resources are needed in this area.

Expectations for children were established on an informal basis at most sites, but with many formalized opportunities for each child to experience success and achievement. Two of the schools wrote individualized learning plans for each child.

As schools moved from "assessment by product" to "assessment by progress," many found it challenging to describe the adequacy of children's skills to parents. Some noted that a barrier to progress in this area was the lack of formalized assessment procedures based on developmentally appropriate practices. "Continuous progress" models for assessment and curriculum/instructional design processes are clearly needed.

Staff development and participation

In the beginning, staff members at each site researched early childhood practices and developed a basic philosophy and blueprint for desired changes. A few programs benefited from involving parents in these early stages of planning. Across all sites, the number of inservice training opportunities on developmentally appropriate practices has been substantial, only decreasing when funding was reduced.

Opportunities for staff members to collaborate and work together across grade levels varied from site to site, but in half the schools, a substantial investment was made in these collaborative processes. One school found a yearly retreat to be an invaluable aid for planning and collaboration in program implementation.

At each site, a core group of staff members was committed to the change process. When teachers were supported by team members, they embraced change readily. Others tended to adopt new techniques more slowly because they worried that children might not learn adequate skills under a child-centered curriculum.

A common problem identified by all sites was the relatively small amount of release time available for staff development and training. Schools tended to use creative approaches to solve this problem, but in many cases, teachers simply volunteered some portion of their own time to develop the early childhood center concept.

Support structures

Site-based decisionmaking was a uniform feature of all six schools. Some sites made decisions as a total group, and others had committees with revolving staff representation. Performance evaluations regularly included information on the use of developmentally appropriate practices. Leadership for the development of a fully formed early childhood center had been strong at each site. But in some cases, support from district officials had been more limited.

Limited resources, both in terms of financial resources and time for planning and program implementation, continued to be a major impediment to change. Most of the schools had acquired some degree of outside financial support to initiate high priority elements. Successful funding acquisition, however, required time, skill, and resources not always available to public school educators.

Family involvement and support

While all the early childhood centers encouraged family involvement in curriculum implementation, very few had a formal route for family members to provide input into curriculum design or to become involved in school decisionmaking. Where opportunities for participation did exist, only one or two parents typically were involved.

All sites placed emphasis and demonstrated success in encouraging family participation in children's schooling. Several schools had adopted the practice of sending work home on a weekly basis for parental review and interest. All schools had active volunteer programs, some operated through the parent-teacher organization and others through a part-time volunteer coordinator.

Schools that had a high proportion of working parents had been creative in identifying "small time commitments," such as having lunch at school with the children or "reading" the work posted in the hallways and classrooms. One school that draws children from the entire district had made parent participation a requirement for selection into the program.

Sites have been somewhat less successful in providing education and comprehensive services to families. Schools reported limited involvement in parenting classes or parent use of library materials. Only one site had a fully formed system for offering comprehensive social services to families in need.

The area of family support and involvement represents the least developed single component in the framework. Models for including family representation, decisionmaking, and broader definitions of family involvement are clearly needed if restructuring efforts focused on early childhood principles are to succeed.

Community involvement and support

At most of the six sites, the linking of community agencies and schools into a readily accessible network of resources was still in the development stage. One school had been part of a pilot project that created such linkages and provided a total case management approach, but funding had run out.

For all six sites, community involvement in school decisionmaking took place at the level of the school board and its committees. However, community concern over innovations could also be voiced through local newspaper or radio talk shows. Negative publicity generated by community concerns can be challenging to counter-balance.

All six sites had considerable success in recruiting community members to contribute ideas, resources, and time to the school. One school has formed partnerships with local businesses whose employees volunteer as tutors and mentors to the children. Another school has been adopted by the personnel of a naval vessel stationed at a nearby shipyard.

Support by school boards for innovative practices had been mixed. The politics of change, and the resultant necessity to justify a course of action, remained an issue for many schools. The most common concern was that students would not achieve adequate levels of reading and writing under a whole-language approach that places little emphasis on the teaching of phonics.

School-based, preschool-to-school transition services

Early intervention and/or Head Start preschool programs operated onsite at four of the schools. The remaining two schools have some involvement with district preschool programs that offered early intervention services. When preschool providers were onsite, staff were likely to share information and inservice training opportunities. While extended day child care services were available at all six sites, the child care program was typically operated by a community provider and coordination with the school program was limited.

Transition services were receiving increased attention at all sites. Efforts were being made to work with children and families before they enrolled in school, as well as when children moved on to higher grade levels.

FUTURE NEEDS

The evidence reviewed strongly suggests that public schools can be resourceful and quite successful at implementing the early childhood centers concept. These six schools, chosen as "early innovators" of the concept, demonstrate a wide variety of strengths as well as a range of innovations reflecting sound early childhood principles and practices. The first

component in NWREL's framework, implementation of a quality program based on developmentally appropriate practice, is the one which has received the most consistent and comprehensive attention from each of these sites.

All sites indicated that they would appreciate additional help with information on early childhood practices and technical assistance on developing more fully formed components. Since time for planning and implementation is also an issue, a commonly expressed need is to receive help with time management strategies and techniques. One site mentioned the need for technical assistance with conflict resolution programs and assessment of social-emotional growth. All sites felt they could profit from consultation on authentic assessment practices. Finding valid methods for evaluating the effectiveness of early childhood practices would help sites justify what they are doing to those who have doubts, and, as a result, would help to ease political barriers.

A review of the evidence from the component analysis confirms the need for some of these requests. It also highlights the continuing need for developing curriculum approaches which are more gender and culturally appropriate, for more individualized approaches to child success and accomplishment, and for all aspects of the family involvement and support component.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this review suggest that successful restructuring efforts must occur simultaneously in a number of components in order for changes to accumulate into a systemic and sustained effort. The six sites under study made systematic changes in classroom, grouping, and assessment practices, developed new approaches to staff development and leadership, altered their relationships with families and community members and organizations, and created new linkages with preschool service providers. They learned a great deal about the processes and politics involved with public school change. Their challenges and problems can offer useful information to others just embarking on such efforts. Recommendations are:

- Change efforts should be targeted in more than one component at a time. Changes in classroom practice reverberate to assessment practices and to relationships with families and community members, who may challenge and oppose efforts they are not included in and members do not understand.

- Inclusion and collaborative processes are valuable facilitators of sustained, systemic change. These inclusive, collaborative practices must occur within the school as well as between school staff and other collaborators.

- Schools involved in early childhood restructuring show continuing and critical need for support in reconceptualizing relationships and policies regarding family members.

- Schools can benefit from learning more about the services available in their communities and participating in efforts to increase or improve those services.

- Training and materials for gender and cultural appropriateness are needed.

Additional areas of needed research and development resources include:

- Resources on application of a resiliency model to schooling, including means for establishing and maintaining high expectations and ensuring success and accomplishment for each child

- Resources for implementing assessment practices which are authentic and encourage appropriate participation by children and their families

- Resources for new techniques for communicating with and empowering families

NEXT STEPS

The Child, Family, and Community Program has revised its technical assistance plans to respond to these findings. Efforts are now under way to develop training modules which will respond most efficiently to the evidence available regarding needs of programs making these efforts. A process of self-diagnosis and training has been designed and will be made available to schools and school districts within the region to support these restructuring efforts.

The School-Based Early Childhood Centers project is also able to draw upon the continuing evaluation efforts being conducted regionally and nationally to revise and refine its efforts to support the concept. In the future, the framework presented here will be refined on the basis of an updated review of current research and implementation findings. Through this iterative process, capacity for assisting schools in working toward efficient, sustained change can be continually improved.

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Appendix A

CENTENNIAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
PORTLAND, OREGON

PROFILE

Population characteristics

Children come to the Centennial Early Childhood Center from all over the suburban and semi-rural Centennial School District. The program serves 40 kindergarten-aged children. Children are chosen from parent applications to assure heterogeneous backgrounds, with a high priority being given to families coming from the Head Start program. Most of the children are Caucasian and many come from low-income families.

Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

Concerned over the student drop-out rate, the superintendent of the Centennial School District, with school board support, began planning for the provision of comprehensive early childhood services in the district. An early childhood supervisor was hired and a task force for early childhood was established to develop a coordinated program. Previous reorganization had left one school vacant but with Head Start and the Steps to Success program renting space in the building. With the recommendation of the task force, two full day, full service kindergarten classrooms were established at the site. While there was some concern about isolating the early childhood center at a single location, coordinating with Head Start and other family services were seen as important assets. Team teaching and a developmentally appropriate curriculum are key elements of the program. Before and after school child care services are also available at the site.

Goals of EC Project

1. Increase the school readiness of Head Start children by providing an all-day kindergarten and comprehensive family services

2. Expand program to include multi-age classroom

3. Develop strong home-school connections including opportunities for parent education and training, and a resource room staffed by a social worker

COMPONENTS

1. **Classroom curriculum**

a. How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?

The two kindergarten classrooms provide for activity-based learning at interest centers. Teachers continually examine practices to ensure their developmental appropriateness and modify approaches based on observations of children's interests and progress. Math is taught through manipulatives and elements from Math Their Way and Explorations. The guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices, published by NAEYC, were used to review and choose commercial materials. Activities and materials are modified to mainstream special needs children. Finally, the kindergarten program was extended to a full day. As one parent noted, "It's the best thing for my son because he's not pressured into learning everything so fast. And the teachers have a lot more time for each child."

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

Learning is integrated through projects, learning centers, and play activities reflecting the interests of the children. The two kindergarten classrooms often use the same theme, coordinating materials and resources, audio-visual aids, and field trips. A shared space between the two classrooms encourages cooperative play activities among the two groups of children. This area always includes materials relevant to the current topic of study.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

Significant time periods are devoted to self-selected activities. Children choose to work at activity centers, placing name in appropriate chart pocket. One parent reported what she liked best about the school was that " the activity centers gave the children an opportunity to explore their own areas of interest, to make choices, and to socialize."

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

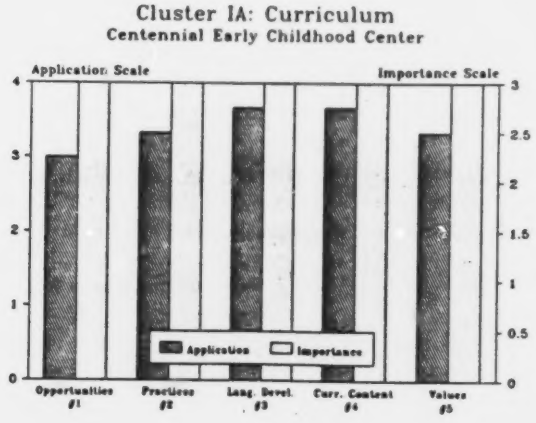
The Centennial Early Childhood Center uses the whole language approach. Half an hour each day is devoted to journals. The teacher typically models writing in a "big" journal. Then children write, draw, copy , or use inventive spellings to make their own journal entries. Guess and Go is another writing activity employed by the teachers. Language/literacy centers in each classroom include writing, bookmaking, and listening areas. The rooms are filled with displays of child-generated narratives.

e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

The staff reviewed materials carefully to make gender and culturally-appropriate selections. For example, the dramatic play area includes a variety of multi-cultural dolls, representing both genders.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Reflecting Centennial's strong developmental philosophy and emphasis on children's continuous growth, all aspects of the curriculum component are rated as being very important. Each item is rated as being applied at the center either mostly or completely. As indicated in the following graph for the Cluster IA items, there are uniformly high ratings across all items with little variation between the importance of a particular element and its application in the program.



g. Barriers?

From its inception, the Centennial Early Childhood Center was designed with an emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices. In the future, however, as the program becomes decentralized, incorporating this philosophy into other schools will present some challenges.

2. School context

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

Students in the kindergartens are a heterogeneous group, selected from throughout the Centennial School District. The application process was designed to insure a fair representation from the various neighborhoods and family backgrounds in the district. Special preference was given to children coming from Head Start. Family needs for extended day care services and ability to provide transportation to the center were also considerations.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Opportunities are somewhat limited because Centennial Early Childhood Center is an all-day kindergarten program serving only that particular age group of children. But since a Head Start program is located in the same building, shared learning activities are planned for the preschool and kindergarten children.

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

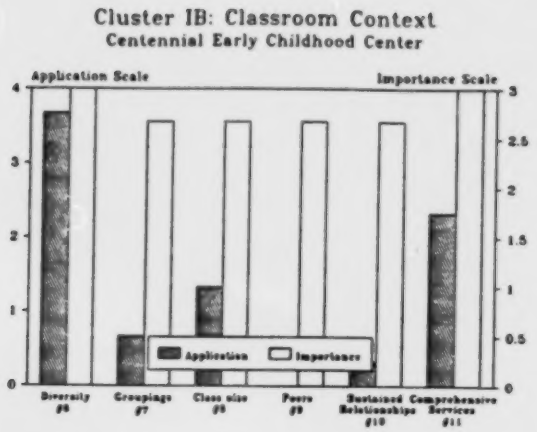
Teachers make home visits and telephone parents frequently, creating bonds of friendship and mutual respect. Teachers also communicate with parents through weekly newsletters. Parents come to school to volunteer in the classroom, working with the children and providing resources for school activities and projects. A family night provides an opportunity for parents to come to school and participate in math and art activities with their children. These communication approaches have greatly enhanced the sense of community between children, family members, and staff although they do not continue for more than one year since children leave the Centennial Early Childhood Center to attend first grade at their neighborhood elementary school.

d. What support services are available to children and their families?

A social worker and speech therapist are available at the school two half days per week to provide needed services for children. Consultation from a school psychologist is on an as needed basis. Other support services are accessible through collaborative arrangements with community organizations.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster IB describing the classroom context, responding to children's special and diversity needs within the "regular" classroom and providing children with comprehensive services are rated as being most important. Application ratings indicate a high degree for diversity within the classroom and a moderate level for comprehensive services. A high degree of importance is attached to items relating to mixed-age grouping and the ability to maintain sustained relationships, but the application ratings are low since the Centennial Early Childhood Program serves only kindergarten-aged children. In addition, the actual size of the classes and the corresponding adult-child ratio is rated as only slightly supportive of achieving desired outcomes for children.



f. Barriers?

Because this was the only early childhood center in the district, there was intense competition for the slots and it became difficult to maintain a heterogeneous population. With the centralized program, there were few opportunities for children of varying ages to learn together. However, with decentralization, opportunities will open up.

3. <u>Assessment and outcomes</u>

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

Children and teachers together routinely review work collected in portfolios. Portfolios change as children decide what to include and what to remove.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

During home visits, goals are established for children in the form of Individual Learning Plans. Parents and teachers review progress toward those goals during parent-teacher conferences.

c. How are expectations established, to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

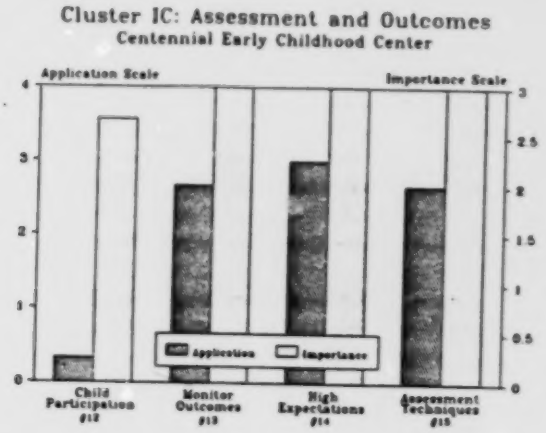
By setting individualized goals for children through Individual Learning Plans, reasonable expectations are established that allow for each child's success.

d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

Portfolios of student work are used to monitor progress. Teachers make informal observations and use a district-designed kindergarten screening tool each quarter to chart children's growth. Report cards document students' developmental progress.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

A high degree of significance is attached to all four items in the assessment and outcomes category as shown in Cluster IC with child participation in assessment considered slightly less important. Monitoring progress, having high expectations for every child and utilizing a variety of assessment techniques that provide a balanced and holistic picture of each child's progress are all rated as being slightly to partially true of the program. Children's participation in assessment practices is rated as limited.



f. Barriers?

The lack of assessment tools to chart children's growth within a developmentally appropriate framework has made reporting progress somewhat difficult. However, district kindergarten teachers have worked together to devise a developmentally-oriented screening tool. There is some concern at the district level over the developmentally-oriented report cards.

4. <u>Staff development and participation</u>

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

A kindergarten planning committee with district-wide representation was established to develop a philosophy statement. All kindergarten teachers in the district were invited to attend meetings. A mission statement was developed by the participants in these meetings.

b. What inservice training opportunities for staff members occur on developmentally appropriate practices?

Teachers have attended classes and workshops on developmentally appropriate practices. Participation on the district committee reviewing developmentally appropriate practices and developing guidelines for kindergarten curriculum also offered significant training opportunities.

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

The staff is small and has worked very closely together to select materials, plan the program, develop the space, and integrate curriculum. In addition, the district uses an early release procedure to provide 1.5 hours each Wednesday afternoon for teacher planning and coordination time.

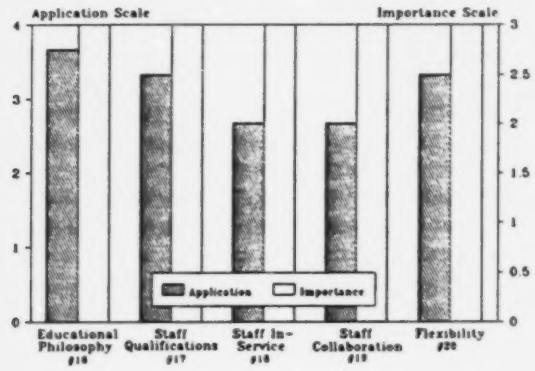
d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

The staff members were hired to implement the early childhood program. All are committed to using developmentally appropriate practices and share ideas and materials.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicated the highest degree of importance is attached to all staff development and support items, as shown in Cluster ID. Program application ratings are also high but consistent opportunities for inservice training and for collaboration among staff to develop and broaden expertise in the field of early childhood education are judged as being somewhat limited.

Cluster ID: Staff Development & Support
Centennial Early Childhood Center



f. Barriers?

Staff are able to attend workshops and visit other schools, only on a limited basis, due to recent budget cuts.

5. <u>Support structures</u>

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

Decisions regarding center operation are made by staff members on site. Because the staff is small and the administrator has other commitments in the district, the teachers have experienced a high degree of empowerment. Decisions about instruction, curriculum, and staff meeting agendas, for example, are all made jointly at the site by the staff.

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

Teachers are placed on a clinical, self, or professional growth evaluation cycle. On each one of these cycles, teachers set personal goals. At least once every four years, teachers must be placed on a clinical cycle where an administrator makes formal observations in the classroom and writes up a formal evaluation. On the self evaluation cycle, classroom observations by the administrator are informal and the teacher incorporates them into a self-evaluation. On the professional growth cycle, teachers do a project or some professional growth activity that helps them meet their personal goals.

c. What resources have been available?

Two grants provided financial support, one to establish wrap-around child care and one for library support. After the inception of the program in 1990, the district had to make substantial budget cuts, and hence, only limited funds have been available for workshops and visitations.

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

Members of the district-wide kindergarten planning committee "donated" their after-school prep time to work on early childhood philosophy statement. A release time period is available each Wednesday afternoon for planning and program implementation. In addition, district wide grade-level meetings held several times during the year provide kindergarten teachers with opportunities to discuss curriculum and program implementation.

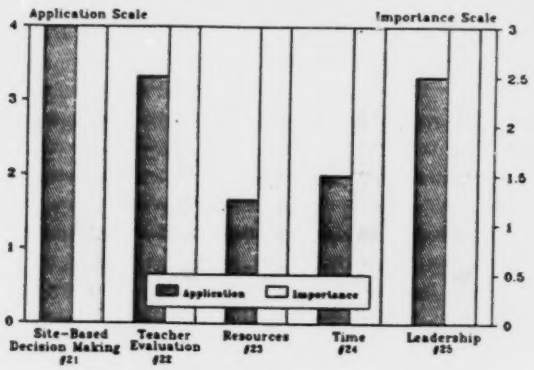
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

Strong leadership has come from the district superintendent, George Benson, who hired the ECC Supervisor, Barbara Velander. With district backing, Velander has played a key role in developing the early childhood program.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

The highest degree of importance is attached to all school support structure items, as shown in Cluster IE. Program ratings indicate complete application of site-based decision making. Application ratings are also high for teacher evaluation standards and practices being consistent with developmentally appropriate practices, and program leadership. Ratings for the adequacy of resources and time to implement desired innovations indicate slight to partial levels in actual program operation.

Cluster IE: School Structures
Centennial Early Childhood Center



g. Barriers?

Time and resources to fully implement the early childhood program are somewhat limited.

6. **Family involvement and support**

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

Parents were a part of the original task force that planned the early childhood center and, as members of this group, were involved in recommending curriculum and instructional approaches.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

Parents are required to attend three informational/educational meetings, since they have chosen to send their child to the center. Parents also are expected to spend the equivalent of one full day as a parent volunteer in classrooms.

Children are given "take-home" assignments to do with parents. Weekly newsletters from teachers fill families in on school activities. Teachers also use home visits, phone calls, and informal chats at school to communicate with parents.

Because most of the parents were employed outside the home and had limited time and energy to help in the classroom, the school has designed "short commitments." A monthly "Love, Lunch, and Laptime" program was initiated to bring parents to school to eat lunch with their child and participate in a learning activity, like reading a story to the group of children. In addition, parents are encouraged to take part in other school activities, including field trips and celebrations.

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

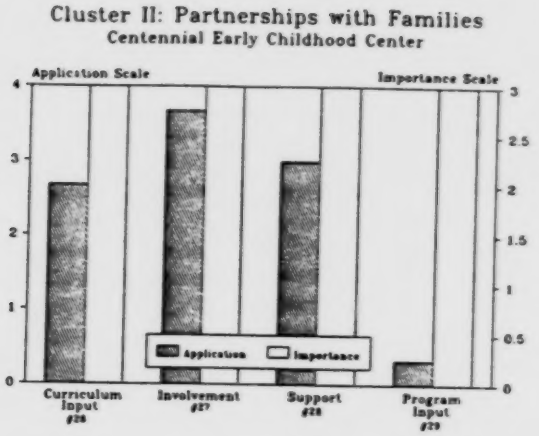
Before and after school child care is available at the early childhood center. Other services needed by families are coordinated through a district social worker. A district-wide Caring Community program provides twice-weekly information and service referral meetings on specific topics for parents. The Caring Community program was initiated through the Portland Leadership Round Table and offers information and referrals to both government and private services such as those provided by Oregon State Adult and Family Services and Children's' Services Division, Multnomah County Mental Health, and the Parry Center. In addition, the Steps to Success program is located at the site. Here, eligible parents can complete a GED or access job training resources.

d. What decision making opportunities are there for families?

A parent committee and "support club" meets monthly and plans school-related activities. In the past, the group has focused on fundraising and other support activities for the program, but the group's role is gradually expanding into decision-making.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate that all elements of establishing partnerships with families are considered to be very important to meeting program goals, as shown in Cluster II. Application ratings are mixed. Family involvement in children's education at school and comprehensive support services for families are both considered to be relatively strong components of the program. But ratings indicate only partial opportunities for families to contributes ideas and resources to the classroom curriculum and only marginal opportunities for family members to become involved in program decision-making.



f. Barriers?

Parents' schedules provide the greatest barrier to developing school-family partnerships. Because the Centennial Early Childhood Center offer a full-day kindergarten with before and after school care, many working parents chose the facility. These parents were often on tight schedules with limited time and energy to devote to helping in the classroom.

7. <u>Community involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to link collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

Child care services, Head Start, and the Steps to Success program all co-exist with the Early Childhood Center in the same building and have formed cooperative relations, particularly when there is overlap in family use of services.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

The initial task force that planned the early childhood center included parents and other community members, and in particular child care providers.

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

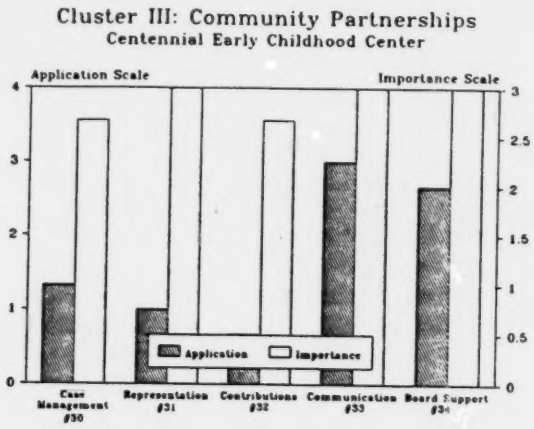
Community stores (grocery, pet, cleaners) have been generous in letting children tour their facilities and in providing resources and materials for instructional use.

d. What community support exists for school efforts?

A 1992 survey of community residents indicated a high degree of support for the Centennial School District and the early childhood program. Over 61% rated the district very highly in comparison to 23% who believed that district was doing an only fair or poor job. Both the superintendent and the school board have deep commitment to the early childhood concept.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate that developing an integrated case management system with other human service providers is considered to be more important than the remaining elements of establishing community partnerships, as shown in Cluster III. Application ratings indicate a relatively high level both of communication into and out of the school and of school board and community support for needed changes. Ratings indicate the program has been only somewhat successful at integrating case management with other human service providers and only slightly successful at achieving the involvement of community members in school and classroom activities or broad community participation in school decision-making.



f. Barriers?

Concern from principals and staff in the other Centennial elementary schools has been voiced over isolating early childhood services at a separate location. This has meant that children do not begin their education in their home schools and younger children are not able to profit from older, positive role models. This concern has led the school board to adopt a decentralized plan to develop early childhood centers in each of the five elementary schools in the district.

8. <u>School-based preschool-to-school transition services</u>

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

Centennial's all-day kindergarten is coordinated with child care and Head Start in the same building. A private child care provider offers students before and after school day care at the center. Four Head Start classrooms serve 66 three- and four-year-old children. Now, with the decision to decentralize the early childhood program, the district aims to increase facilities at each elementary school for providing preschool services on-site.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

Head Start and the early childhood staff share training on developmentally appropriate practices and parent involvement techniques. In addition, a transitioning committee has been formed with school and Head Start representation that meets regularly to coordinate programs.

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

Curriculum is aligned in that both Head Start and Centennial Early Childhood Center use developmentally appropriate practices. Additional coordination comes through shared training and monthly meetings of the transitioning committee. Times are also planned for Head Start and kindergarten children to share learning activities.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

A private child care provider offers students before and after school day care at the center. However, there is little coordination between the kindergarten and day care staff.

e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

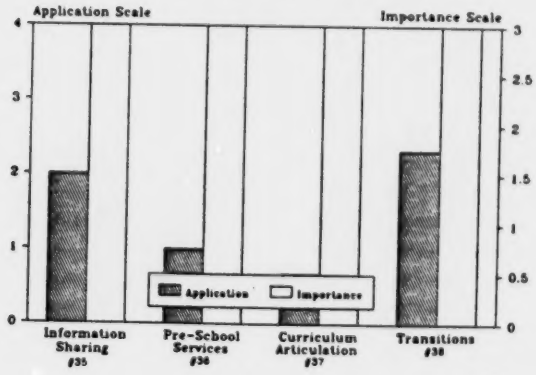
A strong connection has been made between Head Start and the Centennial ECC. Head Start parents are helped to identify with the parent group in the kindergarten, children and families visit kindergarten classrooms, and a "Clothes Closet" on site helps families with children's school clothes.

Surveys of first grade teachers indicate that a few children have difficulty making the move from the early childhood center to first grade in their home school.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

The highest degree of importance is attached to all four items relating to transition practices, as shown in Cluster IV. Survey results indicate only limited success in achieving these objectives. Application ratings indicate that Centennial has had partial success in information sharing with preschool services providers and in helping families to make transitions into primary programs. But ratings also indicate only slight involvement in the provision of preschool services and very little collaboration and articulation of curriculum across age levels.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
Centennial Early Childhood Center



g. Barriers?

Although there is good coordination between Head Start and the Centennial Early Childhood Center, involving other preschool providers has been a challenge. It is difficult for these individuals, many of whom provide preschool services as a private business, to get release time to come to meetings and/or to see the need to provide information to the public schools.

9. Continuing Evolution

After two years as a pilot project, the Centennial school decided to decentralize the early childhood program and integrate the kindergartens into the five elementary schools in the district. Although the superintendent and school board were very supportive of specialized early childhood centers, many of the principals and teachers argued for integration of the program and services into the children's home schools in order to provide better linkages and use resources more efficiently. The EC Center also had become a magnet for "at risk" children and was serving a more homogenous population than originally planned.

Decentralizing the early childhood program will increase the opportunities for multi-age classrooms and cross-grade tutoring and will mean that children and families will have access to a full-time special services support staff.

Mary Harrison Primary
Toledo, Oregon

Profile

1. Population characteristics

Mary Harrison Primary is a K-2nd grade school in Toledo, Oregon serving 250 children from a primarily rural community. The school is a Chapter 1 project with the vast majority of children (85%) qualifying for free or reduced lunches. Seventy-five percent of the families are ranked at or below the poverty line. Families are predominantly non-Hispanic whites with a few Hispanics, African-Americans, and Native Americans.

2. Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

The process of school restructuring began when Anita McClanahan became principal in 1988. Eager for the school to become more child centered and encouraged by a superintendent who was supportive of innovation, McClanahan and her staff began to explore research relating to young children and educational practices. They found NAEYC's book on developmentally appropriate practices to be an invaluable resource, and spent time reviewing each element and applying it to their situation. Through this process, the staff established a core values document and derived a shared philosophy and vision statement. With district support, a developmentally appropriate program was initiated in 1989 and multi-age classrooms in 1991. Three sessions of an alternate-day kindergarten were instituted in 1993. Students attend two full days (Monday-Tuesday or Thursday-Friday) and half-day on alternate Wednesdays.

3. Goals of Early Childhood Project

1. To provide a developmentally appropriate program, recognizing both the age and individual learning needs of children by creating ungraded classrooms

2. To enhance children's self-concept through the use of the Positive Action program

3. To develop school-family partnerships in support of children's learning

Components

1. Classroom curriculum.

a. How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?

All of the classrooms have been organized with round tables, groups areas, classroom libraries, puppet theaters and science tables with interesting natural objects to handle and explore. Learning centers are stocked with books and manipulative materials appropriate to children's age and interest. The reading curriculum is eclectic utilizing Big Books, children's literature, and Success in Reading and Writing by Holt Impressions Series. Most recently, the district has adopted a Scott Foresman Series for K -2 as a supplemental option, offering a variety of trade books and emphasizing a whole language approach.

Mathematics is taught with the aid of a variety of manipulative materials and games, Addison Wesley's Explorations, Math Their Way, and Box It and Bag It. In some

classrooms, groups are broken up into smaller "ability" groupings for children to work on special projects, or for reading and writing. Art and science activities play an important role, with an emphasis on creativity and problem-solving.

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

When the early childhood program was first established at Mary Harrison, a school-wide thematic approach to curriculum was used. For example, in the autumn, the focus was on relationships, using a cognitive webbing approach to look at relationships among people (family, friends, community, and characters in books). Themes culminated in "celebrations" for children and their families: a holiday open house, a multi-cultural fair, and an animal fair.

More recently, the thematic approach has become more individualized. Curriculum is still integrated around themes and projects but within classrooms rather than coordinated throughout the school. When themes overlap, teachers may team up and plan joint activities.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

During a portion of the day, children work at learning centers of their own choosing. Teachers work with children in cooperative, investigative-type activities. Classroom rules and jobs are developed by the children and posted in individual classrooms. Children are responsible for keeping their classrooms tidy with a large stuffed "Mr. Tidy Bear" rotating between classrooms where children do the best job.

Today, both positive action and conflict resolution programs are available for teachers' use. In these programs, children role play problem situations and discuss strategies to reach positive solutions.

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

Mary Harrison uses a whole language approach to teaching reading and writing. In each classroom, children's lists, group stories, and writing about projects cover the walls. Children keep journals. Special emphasis is placed on young author activities where teachers, other staff members, and parents help children write stories and put them into book form. The student authors present their stories orally and books are also available for library check-out.

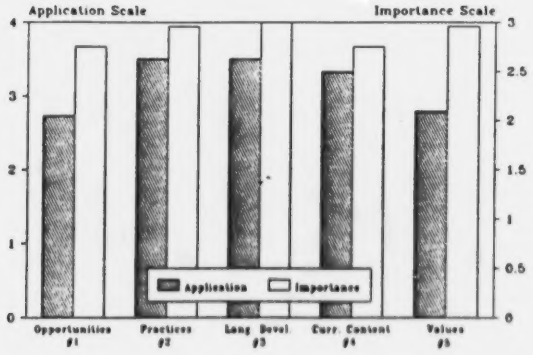
e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

Children are neither separated nor grouped by gender at Mary Harrison. The staff is careful not to vary expectations for children by gender. The kindergarten teachers have adopted the anti-bias curriculum from NAEYC. Throughout the school, curriculum has been planned to build on the strengths of cultural diversity by incorporating elements from a multi-cultural perspective. Parents often bring materials and activities to school that address diverse cultural practices.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results shown in Cluster IA indicate that all elements of the curriculum component are judged to be very important to the program at Mary Harrison. Similarly, application ratings indicate most elements are present in the classroom with slightly lower levels for children's active involvement in decision-making and cultural diversity and nonsexist values.

Cluster IA: Curriculum
Mary Harrison School



g. Barriers?

Implementing a cooperative learning curriculum requires special skills and constant effort. Some teachers see the sheer energy involved in the enterprise as a barrier to adopting this type of curriculum. Having training on strategies to establish and support cooperative learning would be helpful. Additionally, having more time from classroom aides would also be an asset.

2. <u>School context</u>

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

Children with handicaps are mainstreamed in regular classrooms. Classes are heterogeneous with student assignment based on parent requests, teacher anecdotal records, IEPs, behaviors records, family/sibling relationships, sex, grade level and skills levels.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Classrooms include blended grades so children of differing ages learn together. Cooperative learning activities are common in each of the classes. Music, physical education and media are also non-graded. A school-wide morning assembly provides an opportunity for all the children to learn together. In addition, cadet high school and 'high risk' junior high students work with children periodically.

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

A nurturing, warm atmosphere is pervasive at Mary Harrison. The school staff uniformly treat children with love and respect. Little things add up. There is a birthday basket from which each child selects a small gift on a birthday. Family occasions, such as potlucks, picnics, and fairs, bring parents to school for social activities. Monthly informational coffees for parents are held both in the morning and in the evening to accommodate differing schedules. Additionally, close caring school-child-family relationships are built over a period of time since most children remain with the same teacher as they progress in age over two years within home units.

d. What support services are available to children and their families?

Children are screened at school for vision, hearing, and dental problems and referrals provided. On site, students have access to a health assistant. Through the "push-in" program, support services needed by children are made available in the classroom.

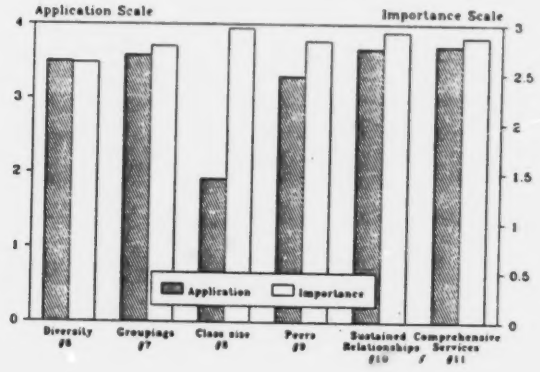
In the past, a "community core group" of service providers (housing, health, and welfare) has offered coordinated staffings on a district-wide basis for those with particular needs. Families and children from Mary Harrison were reviewed and integrated services were provided through this process. However, this combined case management, which had operated under pilot funding, ended in 1993. In its place, Mary Harrison will have a part-time (4 hours/week) family advocate who will work with families to help them access needed health and social services. In connection, a district-wide family support center will be established in Newport.

In August of 1992, a one-day immunization clinic was held at Mary Harrison that was jointly sponsored by the school district, the county health department, Head Start, and several local businesses. Over 85 children were served.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As depicted in the graph for Cluster IB, elements relating to the classroom context were judged to be very important to the success of the program. Application ratings showed a high degree of success in implementing these elements except for class size, which was rated as only slightly supportive of program goals.

Cluster IB: Classroom Context
Mary Harrison School



f. Barriers?

In the past, Mary Harrison has had adequate Chapter 1 funds to serve children's needs within the classroom. But last year, these funds were cut substantially and today, the school only has the services of a Chapter 1 teacher for a half day per week, and only a half time speech therapist. As a result, the merge model has suffered.

3. Assessment and outcomes

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

Students and teachers review portfolios of work periodically to assess progress and set new goals. Even kindergartners are asked to describe orally why they have chosen particular pieces to include in their portfolios. Several teachers are also using student-led conferences. In these cases, students are involved in writing goals with their parents and then showing what they have accomplished to meet these goals.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

A home visiting program was established at Mary Harrison in 1989 and conducted for the next three years. During the early years, almost 100% of the children were visited. Since that time, funding has been cut and the home visiting program has been reduced but is still in effect.

A majority of the visits are made in the child's home. Others may be in restaurants or at school. During these visits, parents and teachers focus on the child and discuss expectations as well as any special interests, needs, or concerns regarding the child's progress. In many cases, children are included in the visits.

Parents are given forms to help them keep track of "My Child as a Reader," and "My Child as a Writer." Feedback from these observations has proved an invaluable addition to the assessment process.

c. How are expectations established to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

Teachers are very aware of the importance of establishing expectations but have no formal procedure whereby this is done. However, on an informal basis, teachers identify children's individual strengths and work to capitalize on them so that each child meets with success and feels the pride of accomplishment.

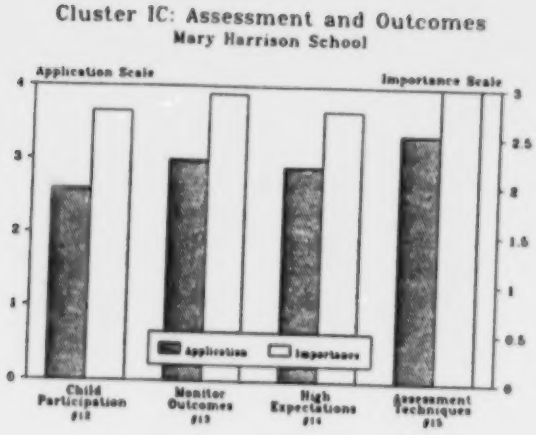
d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

Parent teacher conferences held twice a year. Written reports and student work portfolios are reviewed. Report cards are filled out each quarter. Teachers use a district-developed screening at kindergarten, then teacher observations and portfolios of student work as children progress through the primary grades.

In the past, the California Achievement Tests (CAT) have been used at the end of 2nd grade. Currently, Mary Harrison is using a literacy profile that creates bands for reading, writing, and speaking. At each evaluation point, a different colored marker is used to highlight progress. Progress in mathematics is evaluated with a new assessment tool from Math Their Way. Behavior is evaluated with a social-emotional checklist.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Using appropriate assessment techniques and monitoring outcomes were rated as being very important to the success of the program with involving children in assessment and having high expectations for each individual child only slightly lower. As shown in Cluster IC, the program was rated as mostly successful in applying three of the elements but only partially successful at involving children in assessing their own progress.



f. Barriers?

Implementing developmentally appropriate practices requires careful monitoring of children's progress. In the past, the staff at Mary Harrison has felt a lack of appropriate assessment instruments and adopted new ones in literacy and mathematics. Although the math assessment provides good information, it is somewhat cumbersome and time-consuming to use. The staff is looking for ways to make it less complex. The staff also is seeking a better way to assess social-emotional development.

4. <u>Staff development and participation</u>

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

Before the program was introduced, the principal led the staff in a series of meetings to review research, to develop core values, then a philosophy statement and finally a vision statement. This philosophy continues to be refined at meetings and yearly staff retreats, although, last year, due to funding restrictions, a retreat was not held.

b. What inservice training opportunities for staff members occur on developmentally appropriate practices?

In the past, staff have had a yearly retreat where they worked on issues such as refining goals, key concerns, thematic planning, and evaluation of programs. The entire school staff (certified & classified) was encouraged to participate. During the school year, inservice training has focused on such topics as implementing developmentally appropriate practices, whole language thematic instruction, and cooperative learning. Staff are also encouraged to make off-site visitations to other classrooms using developmentally appropriate practices. Last year, a mini-grant provided training for special education assistants on developmentally appropriate practices and assessing students within the classroom setting.

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

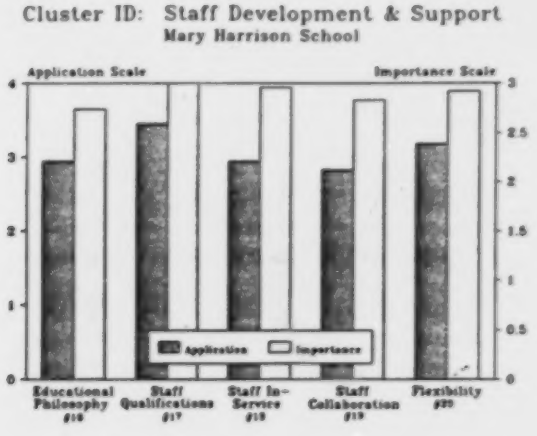
A strength of Mary Harrison is the school spirit of working together. The annual retreats supported this. Because the school is small, much planning is undertaken on a school-wide basis. In the early stages of the project, classified personnel were included in the planning to make sure everyone was in "on the ground level." Today, opportunities for cross-team planning are somewhat limited since funding for substitutes to free up two or more teachers at the same time is restricted.

d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

All staff members have moved into non-graded classrooms and adopted developmentally appropriate practices for at least some portion of the school day. All have participated in the home visiting program.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate that all elements of staff development and support are considered to be very important to the success of the program, as depicted in the graph for Cluster ID. Staff qualifications in early childhood education and staff flexibility to incorporate changes are both rated as being strong components of the program at Mary Harrison. Other elements of this component are viewed as mostly being applied within the program.



f. Barriers?

Some teachers have struggled to change to developmentally appropriate practices. An overriding concern is that, with the less teacher-structured curriculum, children will leave Mary Harrison without adequate skills in reading and writing.

5. Support structures

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

Support for site-based decision-making has been strong. The superintendent has a district-wide action plan for restructuring that includes individual school-centered opportunities for innovation. As a result, the school staff (both certified and classified) have worked together to plan curricular changes, inservice training, and assessment procedures with decisions being made by a leadership team that has rotating membership.

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

Performance evaluations are conducted according to district policy. Conducted every two years for permanent and annually for beginning staff, this process involves annual goal setting, three formal observations in the classroom, and a formal conference with the teacher. Both in the observations and the goal setting process, concern with developmentally appropriate practices is foremost. Daily walk throughs by the principal provide informal feedback on classroom routines and teaching techniques.

c. What resources have been available?

Until 1992 when a funding crisis developed, financial support from the district office was available to compensate teachers for the time they spent making home visits. In the early years of the restructuring process, Chapter 1 funds had been available for a variety of purposes, including supporting enough personnel to permit special services within regular classrooms for handicapped children who had been mainstreamed. Today, Chapter 1 funds are more limited. But strong internal support from the staff has continued to be a key resource.

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

In the beginning, Chapter 1 funds were used to hire substitutes to give teachers planning time. In addition, district funds were used to pay for the home visiting program.

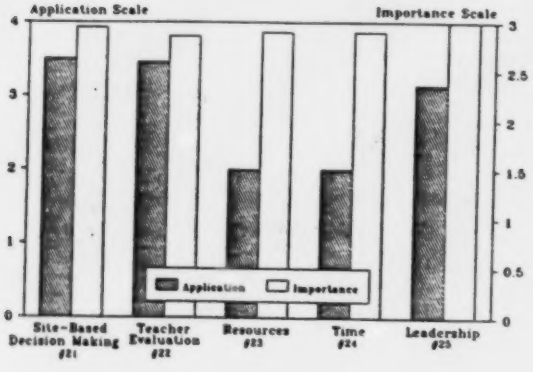
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

In the past, strong leadership for adopting developmentally appropriate practices came from then principal, Anita McClanahan and district superintendent, John Erickson. When both individuals left the district in 1991, Mary Harrison went through a rocky period, having three principals in a single year. But in 1992, when Barbara Fields became principal, strong leadership for the early childhood program was re-established.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in Cluster IE, elements pertaining to school structures are viewed uniformly as being very important to the success of the program. Application ratings indicate that site-based decision making, teacher evaluation standards and practices, and program leadership are strong. But ratings suggest that both resources and time to implement the program are limited.

Cluster IE: School Structures
Mary Harrison School



g. Barriers?

Lack of continuity in leadership has raised some barriers to the development of the program but this should change as the administration stabilizes. A more serious barrier is that loss of Chapter 1 funding that limits staff for implementation of the merge model.

6. <u>Family involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

Parents staff a "publishing center" in library in connection with the young author activities. Parents help children with the writing process, then type children's stories which are bound into books. Parents also volunteer in the classroom and present activities in areas where they have special interests or expertise.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

When the restructuring began, a letter was sent to parents with the vision statement, information about multi-age grouping, and developmentally appropriate practices. The hope was to lay a foundation for establishing supportive school-family partnerships. But as McClanahan has since observed, the staff made a major mistake by not including the parents in initial planning process and instead, presenting the multi-age grouping plan as a fait accompli. As a result, some concern arose when the letter announcing the changes was received by the parents. Meetings and open houses were held to educate parents about the changes. Additionally, several parents (of those who voiced deepest concerns) were sent to a workshop in Eugene on multi-age groupings presented by a nationwide authority, Lillian Katz. These parents became converts and were instrumental in communicating the positive virtues of the program to other parents.

The early home visiting program was an important piece of Mary Harrison's efforts to involve families. Its goals were: (1) to establish a family school partnership between students, parents and school personnel, (2) for teachers to gain an understanding of each student's interests, abilities and concerns from the parent perspective, and (3) to provide information, answer questions and address parent concerns about the school. Since the initial program when almost 100% of the families were contacted, the home visiting program has been reduced substantially due to budgetary restrictions.

Weekly classroom newsletters, describing class activities, words to recently learned songs, recipes, examples of children's work, and suggestions for "homework" are distributed to each child's family. Homework may be couched in an "Ask Me To" section, such as "Ask me to use my sense of touch and describe an object tell you how it feels."

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

In the past, an 8-week parent education series, Bright Beginnings, was offered at a nearby church. Parenting skills and parent-child interactions were covered and child care was provided for parents during the discussion period. The classes were a joint effort between private and governmental organizations.

Families were helped to connect with needed social services through a "core community group" of social service agencies where a combined case management team provided integrated services to families in need. This pilot program ended in 1993, and is being replaced by a part-time family advocate who will be based at Mary Harrison. The family advocate will work with groups of parents on conflict resolution strategies, and will help families access needed health and social services.

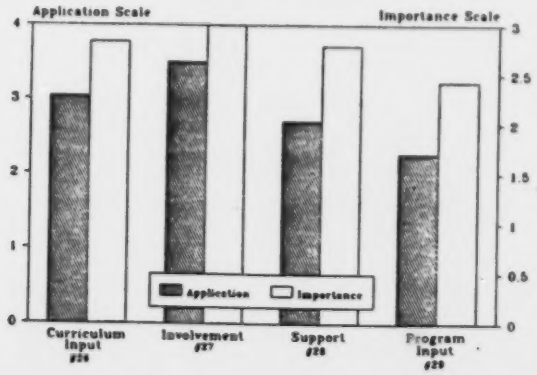
d. What decision-making opportunities are there for families?

Parents choose between two separate grading systems: a developmental one where the teacher reports on the individual progress of the student for each quarter (measured against him or herself) or one where the teacher compares the student's progress to pre-established expected criteria for that age/grade level. Parents can become involved on a district-wide "parent-teacher-student advisory committee" that reviews issues facing the school district.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results point to high degrees of importance being attached to parent involvement in children's education, participation in curriculum, and family support services, as detailed in Cluster II, but somewhat less importance attached to parent input into program decision-making. Similarly, application ratings were highest for parent involvement with only slight levels of parent participation in program decision-making.

Cluster II: Partnerships with Families
Mary Harrison School



f. Barriers?

Restricted funding has reduced the home visiting program. Finding effective ways to involve parents continues to be a barrier to the formation of school-family partnerships.

7. Community involvement and support

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to be linked collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

In the past, a combined Childrens' Services Division and Mental Health Department pilot program provided combined case management for families of school children who needed support services including housing, health, and welfare. Now a school-based multi-disciplinary team is used to identify children at risk and will work through family advocates to help families access needed services.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

A PTSA (parent-teacher-student advisory) group has been formed for parents and teachers at all four schools in the area to participate in district decision-making. Middle and high school students are also involved in their local PTSAs.

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

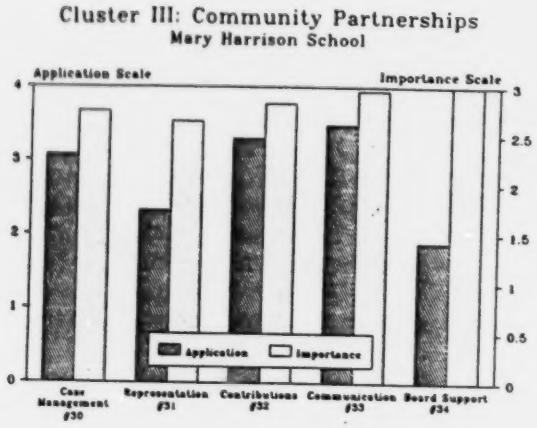
Teachers are resourceful in recruiting community members to visit and participate in classroom activities. In the past, visitors have included a community clown, artists, representatives from a tribal center and from the marine science center at Newport. Community businesses contributed funds to support the immunization clinic. Volunteers staff an "absentee safety" program and call the homes of children who are absent to make sure they are all right. Through DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), a police officer comes to school one day per week and talks to the children.

d. What community support exists for school efforts?

To build community support for school efforts, children's work is displayed at various community locations. When restructuring was first announced, there was great distrust within the community. Many letters of concern were written to the editor of the newspaper. But gradually, through the efforts of a group of committed parents, the community came on board.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

While board support is deemed of greatest importance, other elements of community partnerships are also considered very significant to the success of the early childhood program. As shown in the graph for Cluster III, application ratings at Mary Harrison for levels of communication, community contributions to the program, and integrated community case management are relatively high. However, survey results indicates only partial board support for innovations.



f. Barriers?

The staff developed the changes in the program with insufficient parent and community involvement. In retrospect, the change process would have been smoother if innovations had been developed at the grass roots level, with parents and community members included in the initial planning process.

8. <u>School-based preschool-to-school transition services</u>

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

A state-funded pre-kindergarten program for 57 children is housed at Mary Harrison, in a small, separate building provided by the school district.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

Preschool and kindergarten teachers meet frequently to share ideas and exchange information. Preschool and extended day staff are invited to attend any inservice training given at Mary Harrison.

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

Both the state-funded pre-kindergarten and Mary Harrison emphasize developmentally appropriate practices.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

Through the YMCA, an extended day program for students who need before and after school care is offered at Mary Harrison, using building staff and community volunteers. The program emphasizes tutoring sessions, crafts, enrichment projects and recreation. The morning program runs from 7:30 - 8:25 am and includes breakfast; the afternoon program runs from 3:10 - 5:30 pm.

e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

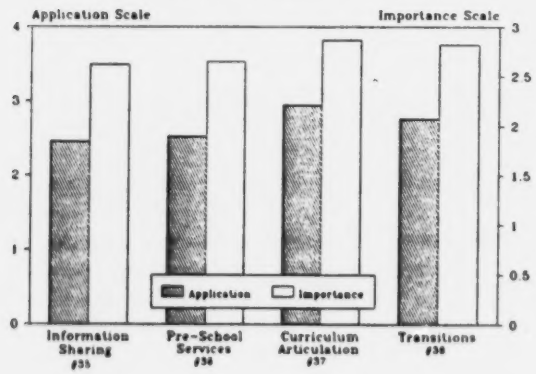
Parents are provided with written information and suggestions for handling children's entrance to school. Children entering Mary Harrison from preschools and private kindergartens are invited to come for a morning visit.

Monthly meetings between Mary Harrison and staff at Arcadia, the intermediate grade school, are designed to ease the transitions for children between schools and increase the use of developmentally appropriate practices at Arcadia. A new 2nd-3rd blended classroom at Arcadia enrolls some Mary Harrison students. Other students at Mary Harrison visit Arcadia several times before making a transition.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Transition practices are all rated as important to early childhood program efforts, as depicted in the graph for Cluster IV. Application ratings are moderate for all four elements, suggesting only partial adoption of transition practices. Information sharing between Mary Harrison and preschool providers is viewed as limited as is actual school district involvement in the provision of preschool services.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
Mary Harrison School



g. Barriers?

Barriers to easing transitions between Mary Harrison and Arcadia include somewhat differing philosophies of education and the physical distance between the two schools. Differing schedules mean only limited amounts of time are available for collaboration between preschool and school programs.

Nome Elementary School
Nome, Alaska

Profile

Population characteristics

Nome Elementary School is a very isolated K-6 school, serving approximately 465 children in 22 classrooms. A majority of the families are low-income and a large proportion of the children are considered to be at-risk. Approximately 80% of the children come from Alaskan native peoples (Siberian Yupik, Western Yupik, and Inupiaq speakers), a few are African-American or have Southeast Asian backgrounds, and the remainder are Caucasian. Although several dialects are spoken, most children use English as a first language. Some children who attend Nome Elementary must move from their homes in outlying villages and stay in town to attend school.

Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

Concerned over the large number of students at risk in reading and other basic skills area, Nome Elementary School became one of three pilot schools in Alaska to dedicated to restructuring their early elementary program. While enthusiasm for the changes were high among Nome faculty, Principal Dave Newton argued that "a restructuring such as the one being designed was only possible if all staff and the school board supported the changes." Thus, extensive staff development was undertaken to develop a strong advocacy force for restructuring and insure that program maintenance was not left to the principal. Staff members attended a state early childhood conference in Anchorage, and the state early childhood specialist came to Nome to work with K-2nd grade teachers. A parent advisory committee was established. Group consensus was reached in May of 1989 and the restructuring project began.

Goals of EC Project

1. Establish developmentally appropriate goals for each child and use the portfolio system to assess progress

2. Expansion of the math program into more manipulative, concrete systems

3. Increase involvement with preschool and child care communities

Components

1. Classroom curriculum

a. How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?

Learning and resource centers in each classroom are the primary means of instruction and are organized to support children's learning through exploration and discovery. Learning is planned around real life experiences. Children are encouraged to write freely, to read literature that is interesting to them and about the world they know, and to work at a pace and with materials that are appropriate for their own developmental level.

Teachers understand and respect play as an appropriate way of learning. During activity time, teachers facilitate children's learning by asking questions, offering suggestions and providing additional materials to help children develop thinking skills. For example, a kindergarten teacher may sit with several children at a table, talking about pictures and taking dictation as children make up stories which they then illustrate.

Learning materials in each classroom address a wide range of developmental abilities. Open-ended learning materials are provided. Card games, board games, and opportunities for mental math and estimation are more prevalent than paper-and-pencil drills. Manipulative materials and strategies from Box It and Bag It and Math Their Way are used to teach math concepts.

Teachers find that children are highly motivated to learn. As a first grade teacher remarked, "When you give kids developmentally appropriate activities, they are engaged and busy, and when they are engaged, they are growing and learning."

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

Learning is planned around real life experiences with teachers grouped vertically to plan an integrated curriculum. Theme-centered units of learning involving three or more content areas allow children large blocks of time to work and learn.

Since the inception of the program, cross curricular multi-grade themes have been running simultaneously in science. Eighteen culturally relevant themes have been chosen, centering around such topics as the tundra, heat and air, fish, and the weather. These thematic units are used in quarterly segments during a three-year period.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

A significant portion of each school day is devoted to children's self-selected activities and active exploration of learning centers. In addition, teachers plan for cooperative group activities and encourage positive student interaction.

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

The curriculum is organized around a whole-language approach. Children practice reading and writing as part of the daily classroom activities. For example, they write notes to each other and the teacher, they write stories and make books, they use computers and typewriters, and they record data. Teachers ask open-ended questions that encourage children to describe, discuss, and explain. Children are read to each day and are encouraged to read to each other. Independent writing and reading practice is scheduled daily.

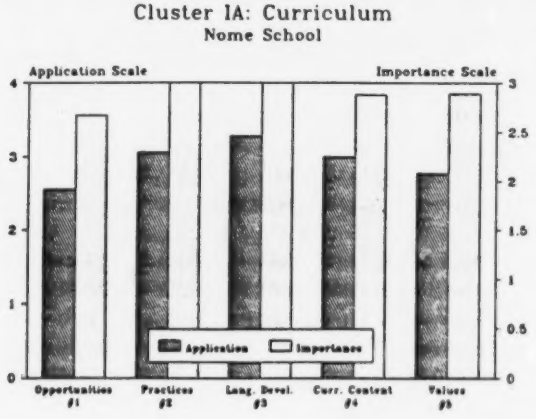
e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

Over the course of a three year cycle, a series of themes relevant to Alaskan native cultures are used to integrate curriculum. A bilingual instructor spends a week each month, co-teaching with classroom teachers on the theme of the month so that classroom activities can be maximally responsive to cultural diversity.

Each child who comes to Nome from the outlying area to attend school is assigned an "Auntie" or "Uncle" from the bilingual specialist staff who is able to speak that child's dialect and serves as a special friend. These staff members also provide important input into the curriculum design process to help bridge the cultural gulf between school and family life.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results, depicted in the graph for Cluster IA, show developmentally appropriate practices and a language emphasis regarded as very important with other elements only slightly less important to the success of the early childhood program. Application ratings suggest that Nome is very successful in implementing the elements of the curriculum component. The school is viewed also as mostly successful in reflecting cultural diversity and nonsexist values, and in providing children with opportunities to make significant decisions regarding classroom and school life.



g. Barriers?

Redesigning curriculum assumptions and processes based on developmentally appropriate practices has turned out to be an extremely complex task, characterized by a series of evolutionary stages. The changing understanding of what is meant by developmentally appropriate practices created barriers in that it was difficult to change those school board and community perceptions of the program which had been based on early expectations. For example, during the later periods of the project, phonics were included in the curriculum and the whole language approach redefined. Yet negative perceptions of the program which were based on earlier practices remained.

Initiating developmentally appropriate practices was more successful with the primary grades than with intermediate grades. Younger children found it easier to make decisions and work together, while the 5th and 6th graders who had not experienced a developmentally appropriate program before were less able to take charge of their own learning.

2. <u>School context</u>

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

Children are admitted to school on the basis of age rather than a screening test. Classes are structured on a heterogeneous basis and grade retention is not viewed as an acceptable means of meeting students' needs. Pull-out programs for children with special needs have been largely replaced by inclusionary push-in programs where Chapter 1 and other teachers serve children in their home classrooms. But serving children within the home classroom has not always been determined to be the best choice, and teachers use their discretion to do what appears to be in the best interests of the individual child.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Multi-age groupings are used within classrooms. Throughout the school, children of differing ages have "reading buddies." Each classroom has been adopted by another, and together, they hold periodic "reading parties."

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

Classroom activities are structured to enhance cooperation rather than competition and to emphasize helpfulness, kindness, and caring attitudes. Staff frequently show affection and respect to children. They talk with children during routines (arriving/departing/eating) and make a systematic effort to speak individually with each child sometime during the day. The Auntie and Uncle program establishes a caring link between the school and families in outlying villages.

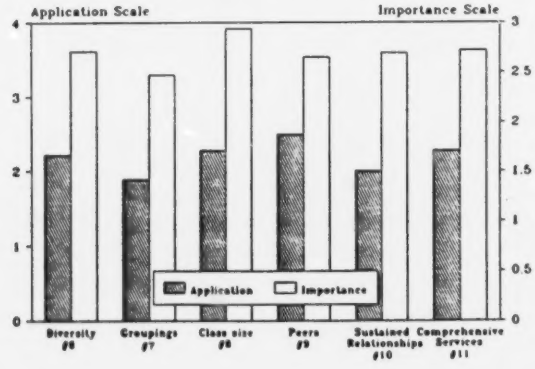
d. What support services are available to children and their families?

School staff collaborate with agencies who help children through the Inter-Agency Coordinating Council of Norton Sound. An OSAP grant established a school-community partnership to assist with drug and alcohol problems in a non-traditional way. A separate grant funds a home-school coordinator to work with families on children's issues. Counseling for children is provided through a cooperative relationship between the school and the Alaska Department of Mental Health.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

While all the elements of the classroom context are viewed as important to achieving program goals, having an appropriate class size to achieve identified outcomes is seen as particularly important. As shown in the graph for Cluster IB, application ratings indicate that Nome has been only partially successful in implementing these practices.

Cluster IB: Classroom Context
Nome School



f. Barriers?

District guidelines have established policies for organizing classrooms. These have not been particularly supportive of multi-age grouping of children. Another barrier to providing comprehensive support services has been a shortage of time that is necessary to build relationships with service providers.

3. **Assessment and outcomes**

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

Teachers meet with children daily to discuss their individual plans and completed activities. Once a month, teacher and students review the contents and changes in the student's portfolio. Children decide what to include in the portfolio and what to omit and orally describe these decisions to the teacher. A record is kept of the student conference.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

Home journals requiring parental guidance are being used. These not only involve parents in their children's education but provide parents with concrete examples of their children's progress.

c. How are expectations established to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

Each child has a "Whole Child Educational Plan" specifying goals across their entire span of needs, including those in the area of social/emotional growth.

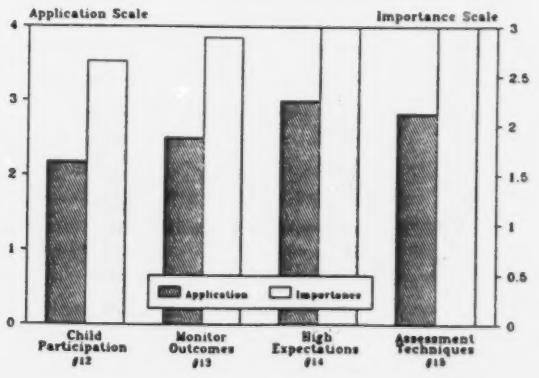
d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

Portfolio assessment procedures are used to monitor children's progress with standardized testing at 1st grade level. A variety of observational records are also in use. Recently, multiple assessment tools have been developed in language arts for K-4th grades. The language arts portfolio includes reading text samples, writing samples, writing/reading assessment based on spelling, McKennan reading attitude inventory, and records of monthly student conferences.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results, depicted in the graph for Cluster IC, indicate a high degree of importance is attached to having high expectations for all children, to monitoring outcomes, and to using developmentally appropriate assessment techniques. Somewhat less importance is attached to children's participation in assessing their own progress. The program is rated as mostly successful in establishing high expectations but other elements are applied to a lesser degree. Child participation in assessment is viewed as only slight.

Cluster IC: Assessment and Outcomes
Nome School



f. Barriers?

A district-wide requirement instituted the use of standardized testing at the 1st grade level. This has made pursuing a developmentally appropriate program somewhat more difficult as teachers have felt a greater pressure to ensure student success on the test.

4. Staff development and participation

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

Staff first participated in inservice training workshops both in Anchorage and in Nome and then were integral in developing an initial statement of early childhood philosophy, needs, and goals. Parents and community members also provided input into the process through the Parent and Community Advisory Team.

Philosophy and belief statements are reviewed annually by the staff. This includes discussion and assessment of whether the activities planned for the students reflect the philosophy, beliefs, and desired outcomes.

b. What inservice training opportunities for staff members occur on developmentally appropriate practices?

Inservice training on developmentally appropriate practices by outstanding early childhood teachers has been held in Nome on a regular basis. Staff members have also been sent to Anchorage to participate in training. One teacher attended training on "Math Their Way" and created a ripple effect by becoming a "local expert."

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

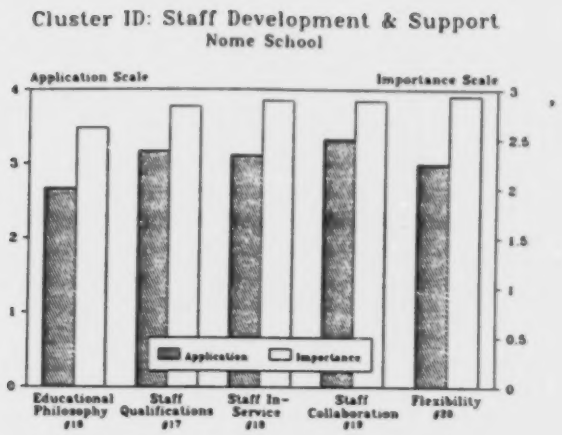
Teachers observe each other in the classroom and share information on an informal basis. Primary and intermediate teachers work together as two separate units, setting goals and collaborating on curriculum. Across all grades, teachers collaborate on semantic goals. In addition, grade level meetings provide collaboration opportunities.

d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

Before the restructuring occurred, the staff at Nome used traditional teaching methods, with workbooks, textbooks, and grade-level achievement goals. For many teachers, the process of change was invigorating, but for a few , it has been more difficult. But the process has brought the staff together as a team. They still have disagreements, but now they talk about them. During the early stages of the program, there was great excitement over the innovation that was going on. But then came a slowdown period as teachers had to do the hard work of establishing an agreed upon set of professional and instructional standards. Principal Dave Newton says, "I no longer believe in school restructuring. I believe in changing adults. And adults change when they feel secure and can personally make decisions to do so."

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster ID, all elements of staff development and support are viewed as important to the implementation of the program. All application ratings indicate that Nome is mostly successful in providing appropriate levels of staff development and support, with the exception of periodically refining a written educational philosophy statement. Here, ratings indicate only partial success.



f. Barriers?

Staff members are at different levels, both of understanding and of comfort with the implementation of a developmentally appropriate program. Concern over whether children will be able to perform on standardized achievement tests remains an issue for many.

Time constraints for planning and program implementation are increasingly problematic. Isolation is a barrier. The staff would profit from more involvement with other teachers implementing similar kinds of programs, but all such visits require a minimum of a plane flight to other towns.

5. <u>Support structures</u>

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

The restructuring of Nome Elementary School has been a bottom-up project from the beginning. A "building team" committee, representative of entire staff, now makes many school decisions. A separate early childhood decision-making unit establishes yearly goals and evaluates the program and the building team defers to it in those areas. This de-centralized system has moved the ownership of problems of problems from the administration to the staff.

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

Each teacher meets with the principal to form a development plan for the coming year. The plan sets goals relating to: (1) gaining new knowledge and (2) applying new knowledge to classroom practices. The plan also specifies the type of documentation that will be collected throughout the year to demonstrate that change has taken place. Plans can be developed individually or in collaboration with other teachers.

c. What resources have been available?

As one of Alaska's pilot programs in restructuring elementary education, Nome Elementary received financial support from the Alaska Department of Education for staff development and training. A Chapter 1 block grant and monies from the Alaska Writing consortium have also supported restructuring efforts. A new facility opened in 1989 featuring clusters of classrooms organized in pods with shared resource areas that was particularly supportive of envisioned changes. Resources also included critical consultant services from the Alaska DOE and good will from the community.

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

Release time is provided for members of the project team to design and plan project activities. Initially members of the K - 2nd grade staff met twice a month (after 3 pm so all can attend) in order to discuss experiences, materials, and concerns, but they were soon joined by 3rd and 4th grade teachers. During the meeting time, teachers consider questions like "What does our philosophy say is important for child to learn? What do we believe children should be learning in preschool, kindergarten and primary grades?"

Two half-day or one full day inservice training periods are conducted every six weeks. Children attend school through lunch and are then dismissed. The remainder of the day is allocated to the inservice training.

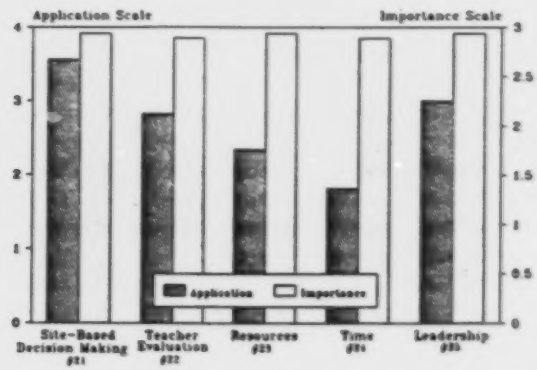
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

Restructuring was possible in Nome because the teachers and principal were passionately committed to the process and worked together. As one teacher put it, "Change has been possible because the principal encouraged us to change. We're allowed to make mistakes and work out complications of decisions. We're not graded. It makes a big difference for the feeling of being in it together."

f. Self-diagnostic survey

A high degree of importance is attached to all five items in the school structures component, as shown in the graph for Cluster IE. Application ratings indicate that Nome has strong site-based decision-making and leadership for innovations, but only partial support in terms of resources and time for program implementation.

Cluster IE: School Structures
Nome School



g. Barriers?

At first, teachers were inexperienced and unused to making decisions and taking responsibility for these decisions. But successful decision-making has evolved over a period of time as staff members gained skills, learned to solve problems and began to look at problems in a non-parochial fashion. Now the staff takes site-based decision-making very seriously and it's difficult when decisions are sometimes counter-manded at the district or school board level. The biggest barrier Nome faced (and continues to face) has been finding enough release time to provide adequate staff development.

6. **Family involvement and support**

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

To involve parents in school curriculum, a "database" of parent resources was compiled --- parents willing to work in the classroom on reading and writing, give demonstrations of craft work, tell stories, or act as volunteers and chaperones.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

Parent involvement at school has increased dramatically during the restructuring process. The staff recognized that "old techniques" of holding parent meetings were not effective in building a wide base of parent involvement. As a result, the staff began by focusing on a small group of highly dedicated parents who spearheaded the development of activities for larger parent body.

Organized as "Parents for Kids" (to avoid the traditional PTA image), the parent group produces its own newsletter and recruits parent volunteers for a variety of activities. Recently, the 100th day of school was celebrated by children recruiting 100 parents to come to school. By the end of the school year, 230 parents had participated in school activities.

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

Families can access comprehensive services that have been integrated through Norton Sound Interagency Coordinating Council.

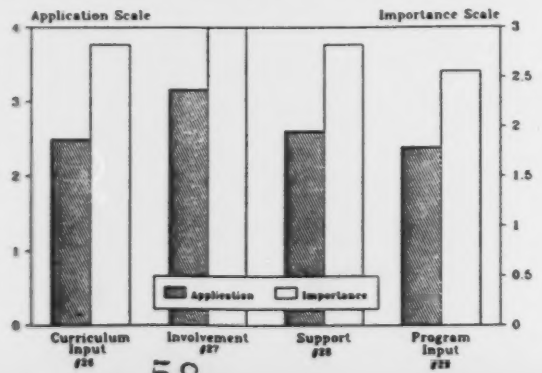
d. What decision making opportunities are there for families?

A Parent and Community Advisory Team has been established that reviews materials and changes proposed in the early childhood project. They either approve, write recommendations for change, and/or list this concerns. This group is not set up to veto change but all recommendations and concerns must be considered by the Project Team before final approval is made.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

All items in the Partnerships with Families component are considered to be significant with highest importance attached to family involvement in children's schooling. As shown in the graph for Cluster II, application ratings are mixed. Parent involvement is rated as being a strong component of the program. But the survey results suggest that Nome had been only partially successful at achieving parent involvement either in curriculum or program decision-making, and only partially able to provide comprehensive support services for families.

Cluster II: Partnerships with Families
Nome School



f. Barriers?

Varying cultural expectations for children's progress and school achievement make it hard for staff to design a program that satisfies all interests. Explaining how developmentally appropriate practices support children's learning of particular skills is often difficult. And although the parent program has grown substantially, finding ways to involve all parents remains a challenge.

7. Community involvement and support

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to be linked collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

Agencies assisting children and families are linked through the Interagency Coordinating Council of Norton Sound.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

Community members sat on the initial Parent-Community Advisory Team. This group later become the core of "Parents for Kids."

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

Community members have shared their knowledge and have helped to bring varying cultural perspectives to the curriculum.

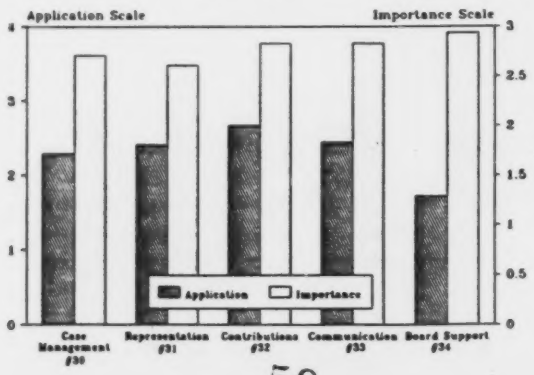
d. What community support exists for school efforts?

At present, relations with the school board are challenging. Some members feel standardized tests are essential to chart children's progress. Others see the motivational value of using developmentally appropriate practices but still want hard evidence that children are learning.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results show a high degree of importance attached to the formation of community partnerships, as depicted in the graph for Cluster III. However, Nome is viewed as being only partially successful in maintaining school-community communication networks, in achieving community representation in school decision-making, and in developing integrated community-wide case management efforts. Board support for innovative practices is viewed as being somewhat limited.

Cluster III: Community Partnerships
Nome School



f. Barriers?

A lack of understanding among school board members about the value of developmentally appropriate practices has challenged the staff to re-evaluate and re-define school objectives. This process has yielded greater understanding for both groups. Now there is a clearer assessment of the development of intellectual skills and content-based learning. Phonics and spelling have been included in the curriculum.

8. <u>School-based preschool-to-school transition services</u>

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

Nome Elementary is actively involved with local preschool programs. An early intervention program for preschool-aged children is located at the site. A private preschool uses the school facilities at times and the director of the preschool is a member of the school's early childhood team. Head Start has chosen to be less involved but staff have attended early childhood training. A representative from the Nome primary staff provides liaison among preschools, the local college, and the school and has assisted the college in establishing C. D. A. training requirements.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

Preschool staffs are invited to all inservice training and each has had representatives at one or more of the early childhood staff development activities. Teachers make cross-observations in preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

The Preschool Progress Report, an assessment tool developed by a committee representing Nome Elementary School, the Nome Head Start Program, and the director of the local preschool, is used to provide school staff with a broad range of information on children's developmental skills and capabilities prior to their entry into kindergarten. Kindergarten and preschool staff meet to discuss this information.

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

Staff members from both programs participate in joint inservice training. Preschool staff were involved in early drafts of early childhood standards. Cross observations have aided in aligning individual assessment procedures.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

Nome Community Schools sponsors a year long extended day program at the end of the students' regular school day. This program provides a variety of enriching activities for students and includes a summer arts program.

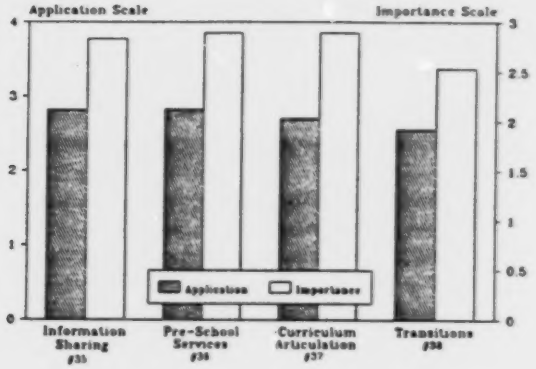
e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

Children from the thirteen villages in Nome's outlying areas neither find it easy to make the transition from village to school life nor are their parents comfortable with the school setting. The "Auntie and Uncle" program matches up school personnel who speak the same dialect as the family to help newly arrived children adjust and make the best use of the school and its services.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Transition services are viewed as important components of Nome's program, as shown in the graph for Cluster IV. However, application ratings indicate only partial application of these practices.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
Nome School



g. Barriers?

Finding time when preschool and school staffs can get together is a major barrier. Slightly differing philosophies of early childhood education also challenge teachers who seek to smooth transitions for children.

PONDEROSA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BILLINGS, MONTANA

PROFILE

Population characteristics

Ponderosa is a Chapter 1 school serving 370 children in a Pre-K through 6th grade program. The school is in a blue collar neighborhood with approximately 25-35% of the students receiving free or reduced cost lunches. The mixed ethnic background of the families is directly proportional to total city population with 83% Caucasians and 17% minorities: Native-Americans (6%), Hispanic (8%), Asian-Americans (2%), and African-Americans (1%).

Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

Curriculum changes began with the realization that children weren't succeeding with a traditional academic approach. Information and resources about different approaches were gathered and discussed. After taking "Talents Unlimited" classes, the staff began to use children's literature for reading instruction and a manipulative materials approach to mathematics. The staff has developed the concept of "teaching children" through school-wide immersions rather than "teaching curriculum." The goal has been to develop a common scaffold for learning that both includes the concepts and skills from the district curriculum and emphasizes shared experiences.

Goals of EC Project

1. Develop global education objectives where curriculum elements are intertwined
2. Increase cooperative collaborative working relationships among parents, staff, and students
3. Offer an activity based curriculum, centered on building language

COMPONENTS

1. Classroom curriculum

a. How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?

Classrooms are stocked with developmentally appropriate materials for activity-based learning. Materials have strong appeal for children: blocks and a puppet stage in a kindergarten; trade books, math manipulatives, and board games in a 1st grade. Desks and tables are arranged in groups to promote children's interactions. Children's work is displayed in each classroom and in hallways throughout the school at children's eye level.

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

Ponderosa's program includes experiential learning through "immersions" in individual topics, lasting from one to two weeks. Immersion topics have included studying Japan, Columbus, physical science, the environment, the Bill of Rights, and preparing for the Montana Centennial. Themes are reinforced through conversation, reading, and writing that extends and enhances learning through shared core experiences.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

Based on the Talents Unlimited Program that emphasizes productive thinking, communication, planning, and decision-making, classroom activities at Ponderosa encourage active exploration of ideas. Students discuss and develop rules for classroom discipline at beginning of year. The rules that emerge from these discussions become the ones posted in the room. Students also list special privileges that the class may earn through cooperation, good citizenship, and positive behavior. In addition to these activities, all classes offer students choices within themes or immersion topics.

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

The staff first applied information gained in Talents Unlimited classes to the Basal Reader Program, then began to develop literature-based classrooms as the primary mode of instruction. Today, Ponderosa uses a total language approach and emphasizes reading and writing in all content areas. Children make lists, write about activities, and write to pen-pals such as senior citizens, for example. Principal Judy Evans has noted that the literacy aspects of each content area or discipline receive a special emphasis since many of Ponderosa's children are experience and knowledge 'poor.'

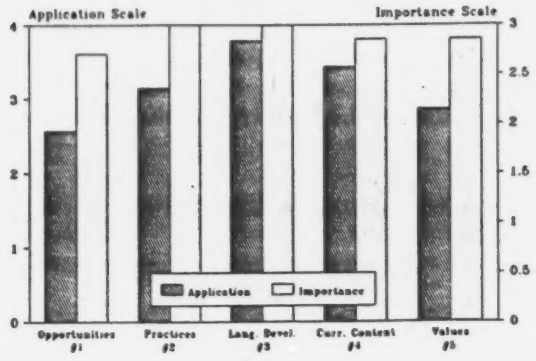
e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

Children and families are encouraged to share aspects of their cultural heritage. In this regard, Native American families have offered tribal presentations. In addition, themes in different grades focus on cultural diversity. For example, the second grade has a unit concentrating on Mexican-American life that is shared with the whole school, and the four grade spends time looking at cultural diversity in their study of Montana. A GESA-trained teacher (Gender-Expectations Student Achievement) is on staff and her training on anti-bias elements has been invaluable in keeping attention focused on this area.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate a high degree of important is attached to curriculum elements, as shown in the graph for Cluster IA. Application ratings show a strong emphasis on language development and the emergence of literary skills. Developmentally appropriate practices and an integrated curriculum with thematically related activities also are considered to be strong parts of the program at Ponderosa.

Cluster IA: Curriculum
Ponderosa School



g. Barriers?

A group within the community is openly questioning any learning activities in the schools that are not a specific part of the "All Billings Curriculum." Resulting negative publicity over their efforts presents somewhat of a barrier to individual school innovations. But board support for developmentally appropriate practices is beginning to develop. The central administration also is in the process of moving beyond traditional modes of instruction and beginning to support new concepts. However, basal readers recently have been purchased for adoption in all district schools. Ponderosa must incorporate these readers into the ongoing whole language program.

2. School context

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

Classrooms are structured on a heterogeneous basis. Special needs children are integrated into individual classrooms and can be pulled-out for special services in the event of scheduling conflicts. But specialists mainly participate in collaborative teaching within the home classroom. Approximately 37% of the students receive some type of individualized special services.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Cross-age peer tutoring is a daily occurrence at Ponderosa with tutors from the junior high school working with the older students and older students tutoring younger children. Primary-aged children have "buddies" in the preschool. There are many cross-age activities during the "immersion" units. The participation of special needs children in cross-age activities has been particularly positive for the school climate.

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

The school is filled with examples of children's work that show the pride adults take in the children's accomplishments. The atmosphere is one of warmth and commitment to children and families. Teachers and the principal send postcards to parents, describing children's accomplishments. Parents report being able to drop in at any time and always feeling welcome at the school. Family participation in immersion units is encouraged.

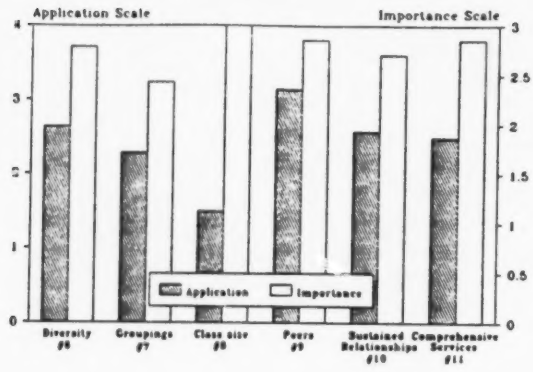
d. What support services are available to children and their families?

A team of specialists at Ponderosa (principal, psychologist, counselor, specialized teachers, nurse, and classroom teachers) review children who had been identified as having problems. The team can request home visit by school nurse or enlist assistance of a district social worker. Through the Chapter 1 program, individualized tutoring is offered by specialists and community volunteers. Last spring, junior high students were bussed over once every two weeks and tutored Ponderosa children.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Elements of the classroom context are considered to be very important with somewhat less importance attached to class groups that afford children regular opportunities to interact in mixed-age groupings consistently over time, as shown in the graph for Cluster IB. Echoing a common theme, class size was considered to be of greatest importance but, in actual practice, rated as only slightly supportive of achieving desired outcomes. Other application ratings indicate that Ponderosa has had only partial success in creating mixed-age groups, offering children comprehensive services, and creating sustained relationships among children and adults over a period of more than one school year.

Cluster IB: Classroom Context
Ponderosa School



f. Barriers?

Explaining the value of developmentally appropriate practices and justifying changes to the school board and the community continues to be challenging. Trust in cross-level education is slowly developing, however.

Another area of concern relating to the school context centers around the use of computers. Some community members feel that staff are not fulfilling their teaching obligations when students spend time working on computers. This suggests that the utilization of advanced technology and the integration of computers into the curriculum has not been well defined for the community and renewed emphasis must be placed on explaining its place and value.

3. <u>Assessment and outcomes</u>

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

Students routinely evaluate their own work within the classroom setting. This includes both self-editing and editing the work of peers.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

Parent conferences are routinely scheduled after the first quarter. Throughout the year, parents are invited to school to celebrate children's learning and "read the halls" where student work is posted. Spring evaluations from parents are requested for upper level students participating in the Generating Outstanding Achievement and Learning (GOAL) program.

c. How are expectations established, to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

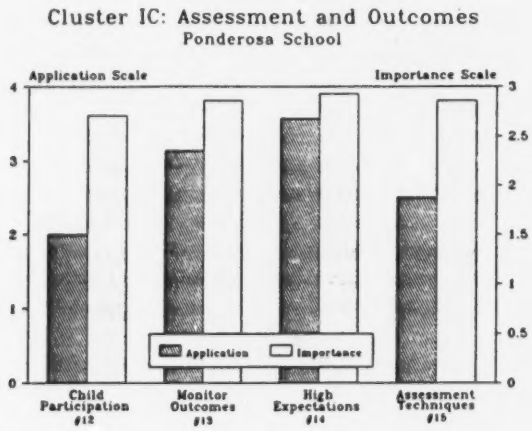
Expectations are established informally, through an ongoing dialogue by staff within grade levels, across grade levels, and with children. Children are not compared with each other. Instead, an atmosphere of acceptance for individual effort and personal growth is created.

d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

Student progress is monitored on a regular basis through the use of pre- and post-tests, student self-evaluations, teacher-constructed inventories, project completion records, reading inventories, and , for grades 3-6, national norm-referenced tests (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). Quarterly report cards document student progress in "subject fields" as good, satisfactory, needs improving. Many teachers keep folders of writing samples. In this way, authentic assessment is being implemented gradually through a trial and error process.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate a high degree of importance attached to all the items relating to assessment and outcomes, as shown in the graph for Cluster IC. Application ratings are mixed. The program is rated as most successful in establishing high expectations for every child in the school, and mostly able to monitor outcomes on a regular basis. Utilization of a variety of assessment techniques is rated as being somewhat more limited, with children's active participation in assessment being only slightly true of the program.



f. Barriers?

The staff is working toward identifying individual learning gains in a pattern of continuous growth rather than assessing a curve of final knowledge. But the district prefers traditional methods of assessment and reporting and views portfolio assessment with some concern. The issue is that many feel portfolios will not provide accurate enough information on the skill level attained by the student.

4. <u>Staff development and participation</u>

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

The school staff began to be interested in curricular changes over seven years ago. The work to develop a language and literacy focus began when one of the teachers visited schools in Australia and returned with books and a report on the effectiveness of a whole language strategy. This validation was encouraging. From that time, ideas began to be discussed informally, and gradually over a period of years, the entire staff worked together to develop a holistic, integrated philosophy.

b. What inservice training opportunities occur for staff members on developmentally appropriate practices?

District wide inservice training sessions on developmentally appropriate practices have been sponsored by Ponderosa. Many inservice workshops have been given by staff members at the school. In addition, staff has attended a wide variety of external conferences, workshops, and classes. Ponderosa has brought whole language specialists to Billings for workshops.

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

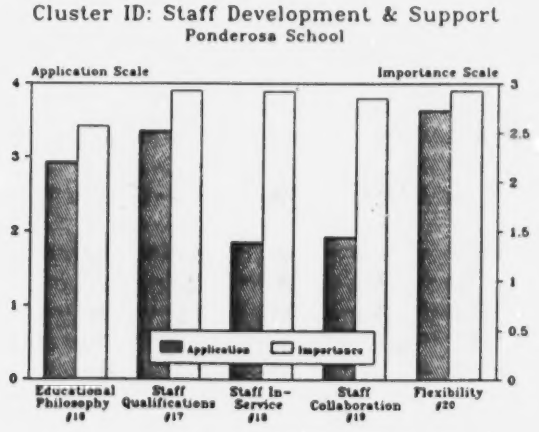
Staff members from each grade level serve on the school-wide "immersion" committee to choose topics which all grades can adopt to some degree. Teachers at the same grade level work together to plan for teaming and unit cooperation. Primary and intermediate teachers meet across grade levels for coordination of students' learning experiences, to decide such issues as which trade book is appropriate at which grade level and which computer software fits at which level.

d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

Ponderosa has discovered that the easiest part of making changes has been motivating teachers. At first, the principal posted all information. Initially, the staff talked about possibilities for change informally. Teachers were given the freedom to try new approaches. As individual teachers began to adopt different practices, the enthusiasm of children stimulated them to encourage other teachers to follow. Some teachers continue to conduct highly structured classes.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Ratings of the importance of staff development and support items are all high, as depicted in the graph for Cluster ID. Application ratings indicate a high degree both of staff qualifications and of their flexibility in adopting innovative practices. Inservice training and opportunities for school staff to collaborate on early childhood education are rated as less consistently available.



f. Barriers?

The staff does not have enough time for planning together and discussing implementation of the school philosophy. Judy Evans has pointed out that the most advantageous activity would be a weekend retreat where staff could share experiences and information, and collaborate on planning without the time constraints of ordinary staff meetings.

5. Support structures

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

The majority of decisions affecting the school are made by staff as a whole group. As Judy Evans reported, " We don't have site-based management. We have site-based decision-making!"

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

The formal evaluation procedure has the following components: (1) teacher self-assessment with goal-setting, (2) pre-conferencing, (3) evaluation activities, (4) conferencing, and (5) follow-up activities. The principal uses script taping, and informal observations of duties and responsibilities outside the classroom, in addition to observations of classroom teaching. The approach is to focus on individual strengths, build rapport with the staff member, and then discuss a blueprint for improvements.

c. What resources have been available?

Several years ago, Ponderosa received some financial support for facilitating a small group of the school staff to develop an information data base on early childhood practices. Other than that, financial support for change has been limited. The school has formed partnerships with several businesses whose employees contribute time and work with children. Money from PTA fundraising projects has been used at school discretion. Several small grants last spring provided funds to bus junior high students once every two weeks to Ponderosa where they spent time tutoring children.

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

Release time was granted by school district for team members (principal, 3 teachers, support staff person) to participate in Renaissance 2000 process. However, much of the school planning is done after hours and on teachers' own time.

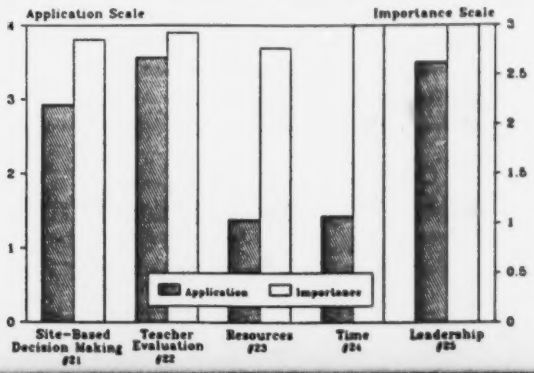
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

Strong leadership came from Ponderosa's then principal, Judy Evans, who has been a teacher and believes in supporting staff success by encouraging individuals to take risks and try new approaches. In addition, the district has been supportive of Ponderosa's adoption of the Renaissance 2000 program.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results show a high degree of importance attached to all the elements relating to school structures, as depicted in the graph for Cluster IE. Application ratings indicate supportive teacher evaluation practices and strong leadership for change. However, Ponderosa is rated as having only slight resources and time to prepare for and implement desired innovations.

Cluster IE: School Structures
Ponderosa School



g. Barriers?

There are not enough financial resources available to fully implement the whole language program. Special needs include compensating teachers for planning time and additional technical assistance on early childhood practices.

6. Family involvement and support

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

Families are invited to join staff and students in learning activities throughout the school year, and particularly, during immersions where parents are involved within their specialties. Parents also have opportunities to serve on district-wide committees which review and develop curricular guidelines.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

Ponderosa has an active but relatively small PTA that raises funds for the purchase of equipment, coordinates volunteers, and sponsors social events and special activities.

A parent orientation evening is held in the fall and a bi-monthly newsletter distributed to families. Ponderosa Postcards are sent to parents telling of special successes and reflecting positive gains children have made at school. Videotapes are made of school programs and special projects and are then available to be checked out for family viewing at home. Teachers make home visits when needed. The preschool teacher has one day per week to make home visits.

Parents are invited to school at least once a month, to attend a program, have lunch, or tutor their own student. An open door policy urges parents to "visit us anytime." Highest parent participation at school has occurred during the immersion units.

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

Parenting classes have been offered in the past, but attendance has been low. A parent library provides reference material on parenting and parenthood. Use of this resource is also low. School counselors and social workers call parents and help them access needed services. School nurses help families find health services. Through the Even Start program, educational services are available for Ponderosa's Chapter I parents.

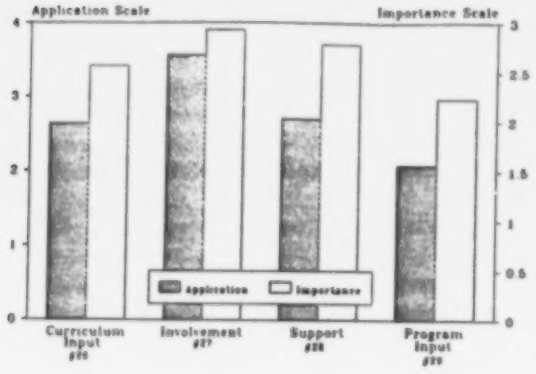
d. What decision making opportunities are there for families?

Parents have little formal input, although many call with concerns or suggestions that often are incorporated in day-to-day school decision-making. One parent participated on the committee for the Renaissance 2000 project , setting goals and objectives for improving student achievement, and making suggestions for program implementation. Parent participation is sought on district committees that set priorities for curriculum, select texts, interview candidates for principalships, and participate in searching for and selecting a superintendent.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Involving and supporting families are seen as very important elements of creating partnerships with families, as shown in the graph for Cluster II, but providing broad-based decision-making opportunities for families to contribute both to program design and operations is rated as somewhat less important. Application ratings indicate a strong family involvement component, but somewhat fewer opportunities for curriculum input and only slight opportunities for program input. Survey results indicate a fairly strong program of comprehensive support services for families.

Cluster II: Partnerships with Families
Ponderosa School



f. Barriers?

Although there is a small group of actively involved parents, outreach to parents has not been as successful as the staff had hoped. Most parents are employed full time and many are in single parent households. The challenge is to find approaches that will draw all parents into the school community.

7. <u>Community involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to link collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

School and district support personnel help families access needed services, but resources have not been integrated into a network.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

One community member was part of Renaissance 2000 project setting goals and objectives for improving student achievement, and making suggestions for program implementation. During a visit by then Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, over 350 parents and other community members were identified as having been recent volunteers at Ponderosa. From time to time, many of these individuals make informal suggestions which are taken into account in school decision-making.

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

For the last five years, Ponderosa has had school-business partnerships in the "Adopt-A-Class" Program for generating outstanding achievement and learning (GOAL). Business employees are involved as tutors, mentors, coaches, or guest lecturers in partner schools and attend various school events. Ponderosa's business partners included Boardwalk Travel, Coldwell Banker, and the Sheraton Hotel. At present, school-business partnerships are maintained only for grades 4-6.

Other community members are involved at Ponderosa through an individualized tutoring program for Chapter 1 children. In addition, the staff has been particularly resourceful in finding volunteers (often retired individuals who have scientific backgrounds) to provide demonstrations and lessons.

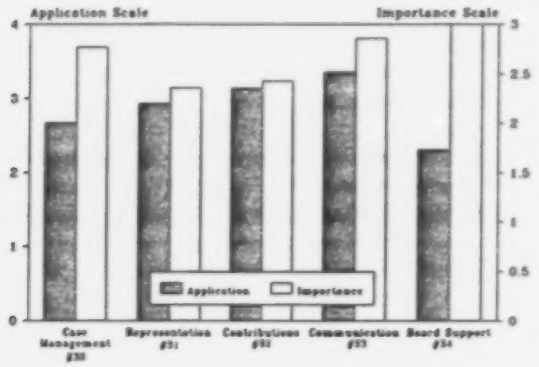
d. What community support exists for school efforts?

Two groups of community members were surveyed in 1992; those who had been involved with Ponderosa in some way and a second random sampling of business people. None of the latter respondents indicated a negative awareness of the school. Indeed, 54% said they had a positive awareness. The vast majority of community members who had some involvement with Ponderosa consistently viewed the school very favorably.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster III, having support from the school board and the community to make changes, maintaining communication lines into and out of the school, and creating collaborative relationships with community human service providers are all viewed as very important elements of establishing community partnerships. Community contributions and involvement in school decision-making are considered to be somewhat less important. Application ratings show that Ponderosa's communication with the community is strong. Ponderosa has also been able to establish a relatively strong program with representation and contributions from community members but has had only partial success in developing collaborative case management systems and in soliciting board support for innovations.

Cluster III: Community Partnerships
Ponderosa School



f. Barriers?

The school board has not been uniformly supportive of developmental changes at Ponderosa. Some members are concerned about the whole language approach and would prefer phonics to be emphasized. A community group that is trying to emphasize "the basics" in education and censor books is highly critical of Ponderosa and has generated some negative publicity. Responding to these community members continues to be challenging.

8. <u>School-based preschool-to-school transition services</u>

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

A district special education program focusing on early intervention serves handicapped children aged 3-5 years on site at Ponderosa. When appropriate, these children are included in Ponderosa's school-wide programs.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

Preschool staff from the early intervention program are an integral part of Ponderosa and participate in all school-wide meetings and inservice training.

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

Curriculum is coordinated through informal discussions among staff. Preschool children attend assemblies, use the school library, and are involved in immersion activities. In addition, a mini-grant supported a cooperative effort between preschool staff and kindergarten teachers to improve language skills during kindergarten and coordinated specific language activities to support children's continuous growth.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

Ponderosa keeps a list of child care providers in the local area and supplies this information, without recommendations, to parents who need referrals for child care services.

e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

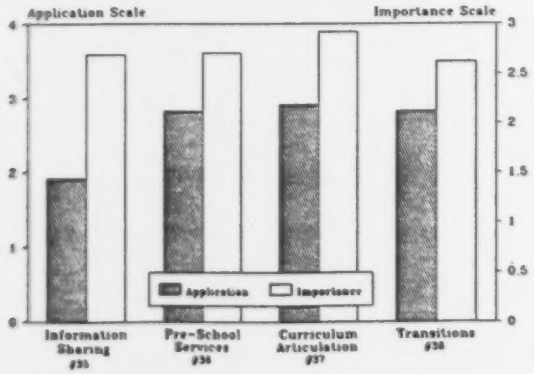
The school staff works closely with preschools, including Head Start, the STEP group, and a home-based early childhood program. Staff have informal discussions as children move from one level to the next with the transfer of information occurring through individual efforts of teachers. Parents and new kindergarten students are invited to school in the spring before they will attend. Children visit classrooms while parents complete forms and watch a video presentation on kindergarten readiness.

The transition to 3rd grade and to intermediate school eased by GOAL meetings with parents and the GOAL advisory group. Junior high counselors visit Ponderosa and make arrangements for 6th grade students and their parents to visit the junior high, prior to the students' attending.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Transition practices are considered to be very important to the overall success of the early childhood program, as shown in the graph for Cluster IV, and Ponderosa has been somewhat successful in providing these services. Application ratings indicate a high level of preschool services, curriculum articulation with preschool providers, and transition services from preschool to school. Information sharing between Ponderosa and preschool providers is more limited.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
Ponderosa School



g. Barriers?

Finding time to promote transition services and funds to underwrite efforts continues to be challenging.

SOUTH COLBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON

PROFILE

Population characteristics

South Colby Elementary School is located near the outskirts of Port Orchard, Washington on the Kitsap Peninsula, approximately one hour from Tacoma. One of ten elementary schools in the South Kitsap School District, South Colby is a K-6 school, serving approximately 500 students from a semi-rural area. Most of the students come from a lower to middle income background. Most are Caucasian, with a slowly increasing number of minority children.

Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

Impetus for change came from the school's concern over the students' inability to sustain motivation for learning. John Lindley, then principal, was involved with NAESP and this led to his participation on a National Science Academy committee on retention. He channeled information about the potential of early childhood programs to the staff who made the commitment to change. The school received three consecutive state grants to attend a Practitioner's Committee Workshop in order to develop an understanding of the components for successful early childhood education. Implementation of developmental instruction has been proceeding gradually, beginning with kindergarten and 1st grade, and is developing in other grades.

Goals of EC Project

1. Create student learning objectives based on a continuum of incremental age-related steps, to augment those established by grade level

2. Develop a parent reporting process highlighting children's progress toward individual objectives

3. Establish multi-age classrooms and create an atmosphere of positive staff communication across grade levels

COMPONENTS

1. Classroom curriculum

a. How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?

Classroom configurations and routines have been redesigned. Learning centers have been established in the classrooms, stocked with developmentally appropriate materials and activities. Open-ended activities that encourage exploration and discovery predominate. Math programs emphasize the use of manipulative materials, including strategies from Box It and Bag It, Math In the Mind's Eye, and Math Their Way. In a typical classroom, one-third of the day is devoted to large group activities, one third to small groups, and one third to self selected activities in the learning centers. A sequence of "Plan, do, review," based on the High Scope model, is used at most grade levels to help children plan, record, and review their work. Cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring are also used extensively throughout the school.

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

The curriculum is integrated around themes and projects within each classroom. In some classrooms, these topics are selected weekly to keep the children's interest high. In other classes, themes and projects may continue for several weeks. Themes may be appropriate to the time of the year such as studying harvest myths and the history of Halloween or involve simulation games in which, for example, class members imagine themselves to be a group from another planet traveling through space and preparing to land on Earth.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

A heavy emphasis is placed on the active involvement of students in their own learning. Children have an opportunity to select learning center activities during a portion of each school day. The "plan, do, review" sequence actively engages children in learning and decision-making by making them accountable for planning, recording, and then explaining what they have accomplished to the teacher. In addition, cooperative learning techniques are stressed throughout the school.

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

A whole language approach has been adopted schoolwide. Classrooms are stocked with a variety of trade books. Children write stories, make books, and read their creations aloud. Time is allocated during the school day for both solo and buddy reading. Children keep journals. The "plan, do, review" sequence requires children to record their activities. Language arts are also integrated with science, math, and social studies topics.

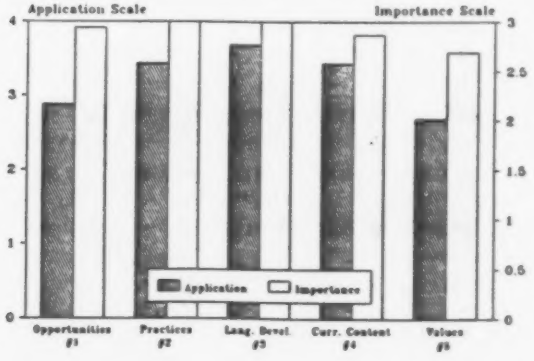
e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

Themes of cultural diversity are integrated into the curriculum at all grade levels. For example, a recent theme in the primary grades focused on peoples around the world. Aspects of life on the Pacific islands and in various Asian and European countries were studied. The similarities among peoples were emphasized in addition to differences in life and customs.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster IA, all the items in the curriculum cluster are rated as being very important to the success of the program with slightly less significance being attached to cultural diversity. Application ratings indicate a relatively high degree of developmentally appropriate practices and utilization of a whole language approach. Ratings of partial to mostly were assigned to opportunities for children's active involvement in learning and the reflection of culturally diverse and nonsexist values in materials and activities.

Cluster IA: Curriculum
South Colby School



g. Barriers?

In the past, district support for developmentally appropriate practices and continuous progress wasn't as strong, since district learning objectives were written in terms of grade-level and content area achievement. However, this is changing as the district moves to outcome based education. Much progress has been made in this area.

In the beginning, the staff had an uneven understanding of developmentally appropriate practices. Concern was aroused when attention was concentrated on the kindergarten and first grade. This barrier was resolved through training and inclusion of all staff in the change process as they team up and share information and ideas.

2. School context

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

Classes are heterogeneous with mainstreaming of special needs children. Some teachers prefer the mainstreamed children to be pulled out for special services, other teachers ask that the special education teacher joins them in the home classroom. As a result, both approaches are used.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Multi-age groupings are used at all age levels in the school, except in the kindergarten. Three multi-age classrooms blend 1st - 3rd grades and another three blend 4th-6th grades. All classes engage in cross-age tutoring. For example, lower level children from the 4th-6th grade classrooms compiled a 'resource base' and told stories about inventors and inventions to 2nd graders. The 2nd graders then wrote and illustrated a report about what they had learned.

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

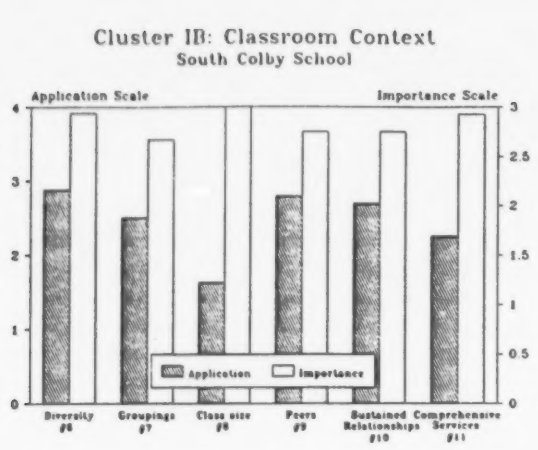
Cross-age tutoring has reduced competitive behaviors and encouraged children to be supportive of each other. Children in multi-age classrooms have an opportunity to develop caring relationships with teachers as they remain in the same group over a period of one to three years. In addition, school-wide newsletters, Friday letters from teachers and children, informal conversations, celebration of volunteers, and other school events offer opportunities for all school personnel, children, and family members to develop ongoing supportive relationships.

d. What support services are available to children and their families?

A schoolwide Child Study Team (primary and intermediate teacher, communication disorder specialist, resource specialist, learning assistance program teacher, and principal) meets several times each month to review and plan for children teachers have referred. In addition, a part-time intervention specialist is available to help teachers. The number of referrals has dropped as early childhood restructuring efforts have been implemented.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate greatest importance being attached to having a class size that will foster desired outcomes as shown in the graph for Cluster IB. Other elements of the classroom context are also considered to be very important. Application ratings show South Colby is somewhat successful in applying these elements but only slightly able to provide appropriately sized classes that foster desired child outcomes.



f. Barriers?

Lack of state and federal monies to support early childhood innovations and support services continues to be a barrier. Although an intervention specialist was available in the past, that service is not currently available at South Colby.

3. <u>Assessment and outcomes</u>

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

The "plan, do, review" sequence where children account for their time during the learning centers period provides an opportunity for children to review and assess their progress. Planning and recording their activity helps children think about the choices they are making and what they are learning as they work. In addition, children decide on work to include and exclude from portfolios, and in some classes, participate as leaders in the traditional parent-teacher conferences.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

Parents participate in assessment of children's progress by reviewing work on parent nights and over the weekend when "Friday folders" are sent home. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year and parents have an opportunity at those times to assess children's progress. In addition, parents are encouraged routinely to contact and/or visit their child's classroom to observe and meet with the teacher on an informal basis.

c. How are expectations established to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

Each teacher communicates expectations to the students and parents on an informal basis during classroom periods, open houses, notes or phone calls home, or parent-teacher conferences. Establishing avenues for open communication is a high priority at South Colby to help teachers, students, and parents become aware of each others' expectations.

In addition, a variety of classroom and school-wide recognition programs exist to insure that each child experiences feelings of success and accomplishment. Throughout the school, bulletin boards are used to showcase students' work. Every student has work displayed at some time during the year. Both individual and classroom awards are presented at monthly assemblies. Students also make presentations or display projects during these times.

d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

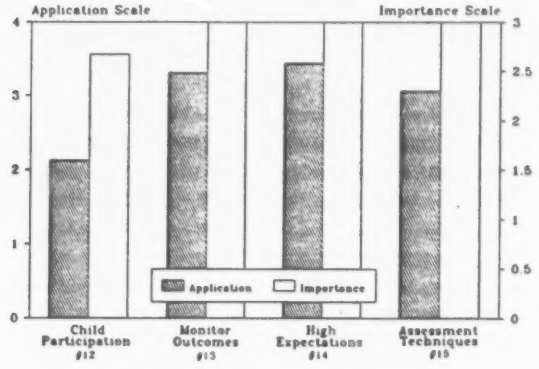
South Colby uses publisher's basal-related magazine tests to monitor progress in reading. Other assessment techniques include student portfolios, teacher observations, teacher-devised tests, and student demonstrations of skills and knowledge.

The district has recently switched to developmentally oriented report cards for the primary levels. For example, report cards for K - 3rd grades have been rewritten to reflect developmental goals and no letter grades are given. Instead of a grade-level objective such as "achieve mastery of phonics," the report card charts the continuous progress of the student by using such phrases as "introduced phonics" or "emerging phonics."

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Elements of assessment and outcomes are considered to be very important, as shown by the graph for Cluster IC. Somewhat less importance is attached to children participating in the assessment of their progress. Application ratings indicate that South Colby mostly utilizes these practices. However, survey results suggest only partial opportunities for children to participate in assessment.

Cluster IC: Assessment and Outcomes
South Colby School



f. Barriers?

At first, parents wanted to see grades on report cards to document children's achievement. The staff has had to educate parents about viewing children's progress on a continuum of continuous growth. Most parents are now enthusiastic in their acceptance of the developmentally-oriented report card. For South Colby, however, a barrier to progress in this area is the lack of a set of formalized assessment procedures that are based on developmentally appropriate practices.

4. <u>Staff development and participation</u>

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

Staff involvement has been high. Staff members began a study and discussion of early childhood educational research and program development guides that gradually progressed from casual conversations to biweekly meetings before school. The outcome was the development of a child-centered school philosophy.

b. What inservice training opportunities for staff members occur on developmentally appropriate practices?

For three consecutive years, a team of six school staff members met with a resource specialist in a Practitioners' Committee Workshops. Staff have visited classrooms at other schools that have adopted developmentally appropriate practices and received training from the High Scope Foundation.

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

In the past, teachers were grouped vertically across grade levels to study such topics as cooperative learning techniques, whole language articulation, and computer software coordination. These vertical teams also provided support, observation, and assessment of teaching strategies and monthly all-staff meetings included a review of team efforts.

Today, this system has been reorganized into an 11-person "shared decision team" that includes representatives from all grades, classified staff, and the parent body. Most of the collaboration in the school is now done by this group.

d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

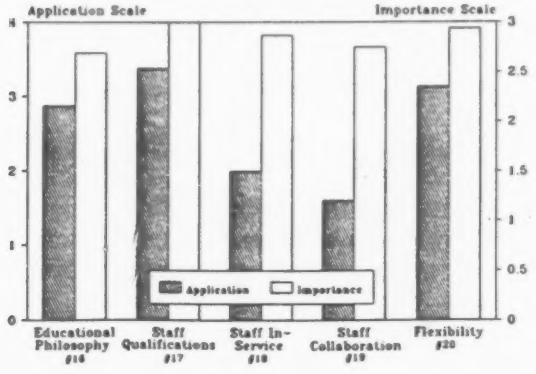
The initial plan was to put developmentally appropriate practices into effect in the kindergarten and then each year, restructure the next grade level. But other teachers were excited by the innovations and moved ahead of schedule. As one remarked, "We feel much support from our principal to make progress --- to find out what will make a difference for our kids and then, to go for it."

Not everyone was enthusiastic nor knew how to take the plunge. And this created some stress and anxiety, as teachers compared themselves with those who have moved faster. But as past principal Lindley noted, "When teachers realized they were responsible for their own classroom and that no one was going to tell to make modifications, their attitude change has been remarkable.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate that all elements of staff development and support are considered to be important with greatest significance attached to staff qualifications and flexibility, as shown in the graph for Cluster ID. Application ratings show that South Colby has mostly been successful in those two domains and in working together to develop and refine an educational philosophy. But survey results suggest only partial success in providing consistent opportunities for staff in-service or collaboration on early childhood practices.

Cluster ID: Staff Development & Support
South Colby School



f. Barriers?

Time to do essential planning, to implement the program, and to educate parents and others about the value of developmentally appropriate practices continues to be limited. In addition, when teachers were isolated within their classrooms, they found it somewhat difficult to change and adopt new techniques. But teachers who were supported by team members embraced change more readily.

5. Support structures

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

Site-based management is practiced with staff being a vital link in the decision-making process. An 11-person "shared decision team" has been established that has rotating, representative membership. In addition, a portion of the school purchasing decisions are made by classroom teams so that staff members will see the global impact of decisions.

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

Teachers select how they will be evaluated from a two-track system. The "summative model" includes the traditional principal observation with pre- and post-conferencing and a written summary of performance in a variety of areas. The "formative model" involves a goal-setting process that has teachers establishing specific goals and meeting at least three times during the year to assess, modify, and discuss progress toward those goals.

c. What resources have been available?

State grants from Superintendent of Public Instruction were awarded to South Colby to send six staff members to "Practitioner's Committee Workshop " each year from 1987 to 1991. Early childhood "experts" were brought to the school to help principal and staff redesign curriculum and program. Thus, available money was focused on staff development. Early in the restructuring, school resources were used to purchase substitute teacher time so that involved staff could plan and coordinate an integrated program. Staff spent money allocated for textbooks on developmentally appropriate curriculum materials (trade books, math manipulatives and other learning center materials).

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

In the past, on-going planning time has been extremely limited and handled internally as much as possible. No district funds were available to compensate teachers for planning time. This has improved recently, however, as the district has provided a number of release time half-days for planning and implementing programmatic innovations.

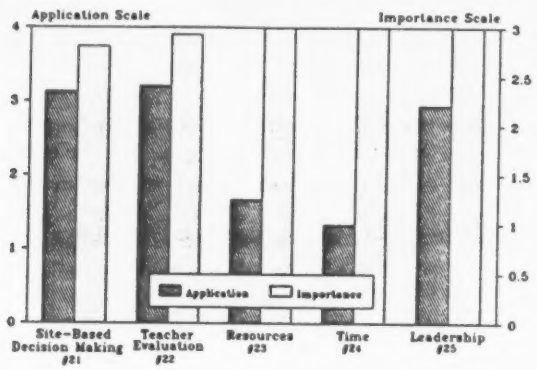
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

The past principal, John Lindley, and committed staff members provided strong leadership for change. Since Lindley's departure, leadership has continued to come from members of the staff and the new principal, Brian Pickard. Pickard has been particularly effective in bringing about district-level understanding of South Colby's changed program. To bridge any gaps that might have existed in the past, he has invited people from the district office to visit South Colby and see the program first hand. This has helped the district staff to feel more comfortable with innovations while, at the same time, helping the South Colby staff to feel more supported in their efforts.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster IE, all elements of school structures are considered to be very important to successful innovations. Application ratings are mixed, however. South Colby has been able mostly to adopt site-based decision-making, provide teacher evaluations that are supportive of the utilization of developmentally appropriate practices, and provide strong leadership for change. But resources and time are both rated as only slightly supportive of innovations.

Cluster IE: School Structures
South Colby School



g. Barriers?

When South Colby first considered making changes in their instructional model, staff was hampered somewhat by district guidelines and lack of funds to support planning and program implementation activities. But the school board gave South Colby permission to seek grant money for training and the adoption of an innovative early childhood program that emphasized an integrated curriculum, blended classrooms, and developmentally appropriate practices. Today, district guidelines are changing to outcome based education and other schools within the district are also utilizing a developmental approach.

6. <u>Family involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

At the district level, parents have opportunities to be involved on various curriculum committees. A parent participates on South Colby's "shared decision team" and provides input into curriculum design through this mechanism. Family members, mostly parents, have areas of expertise in different areas of study and teachers encourage sharing with these experiences and interests with students.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

Children are given homework. Parents are asked to be supportive, to provide time and a quiet place for child to do homework, to help, but not to do the work for children. Folders containing children's work for the week are sent home with children on Fridays. Parents are asked to review material with their student and return folders on Monday morning. Teachers report that children now bring more materials and ideas from home to share with the school than they previously did.

A monthly school newsletter has been useful in communicating changes to parents and explaining the values of developmentally appropriate practices. Parents are encouraged to visit school and volunteer in classrooms. A PTO meets monthly and undertakes fund-raising activities to support school projects and needs.

South Colby has a very active volunteer program staffed by a half-time coordinator. Parent volunteers tutor individual students, help with group learning activities, and share expertise and interests in classroom learning activities. These volunteers put in several hundred hours at the school each month.

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

The school can make referrals for families to needed services within the community, but at present, there is no organized system for providing education and comprehensive social services.

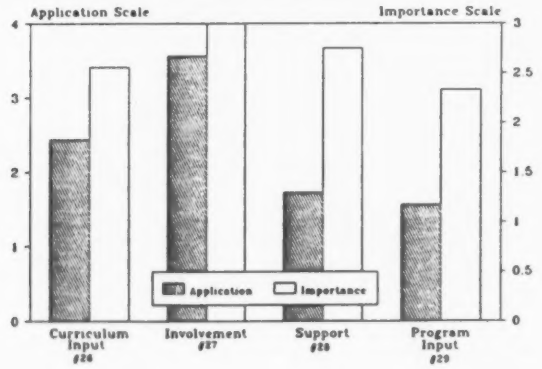
d. What decision making opportunities are there for families?

An annual parent survey is conducted, providing an opportunity for families to voice opinions about school practices. Parent opinions are also sought through PTO and newsletter as a part of South Colby's rigorous self-study process. Parent involvement in actual decision-making is limited to representation on South Colby's shared decision team.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

A very high degree of importance is attached to parent involvement, as depicted in the graph for Cluster II, with comprehensive support services for families also considered to be very important. Family input in curriculum and program decision-making both are considered to be important but somewhat less so. Application ratings suggest that South Colby consistently expects and encourages family members to become involved in children's education at school. Ratings also show the school has only partially been able to provide opportunities for family members to have curriculum input and only slight to partial success in providing comprehensive family support services and opportunities for family involvement in program decision-making.

Cluster II: Partnerships with Families
South Colby School



f. Barriers?

While most parents have been very supportive of developmental changes, some are worried about their primary-aged children achieving "academic goals." The pressure to explain developmentally appropriate practices continues to be high. Conferences and "parent nights" are used as vehicles to provide parents with research information and encouragement.

7. **Community involvement and support**

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to be linked collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

Although recognizing this need, South Colby does not have access to a comprehensive network of resources and services for families in need.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

South Colby is beginning to incorporate community members into school decision-making through representation on the site-based "shared decision team." At present, one parent is part of this group.

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

With the help of a part-time volunteer coordinator, South Colby staff utilizes the assistance of community members as volunteers in the classroom and building. Community businesses also are contacted for donations and contributions to enhance special projects and programs. South Colby is located near a naval ship yard, and the personnel of the U.S.S. Truxton have "adopted" the school. They tutor students, help with preparations for special programs, and provide expertise in a number of areas, including helping to install an intercom system in the school building.

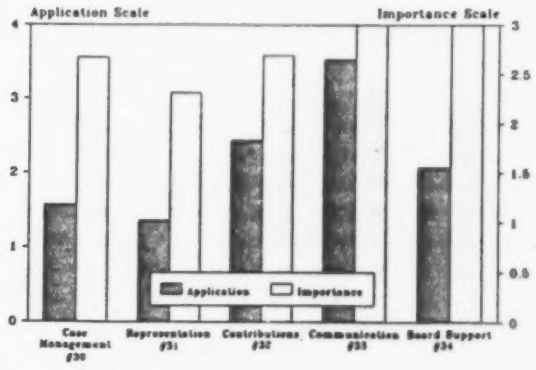
d. What community support exists for school efforts?

The school board has been supportive of South Colby's move toward a more developmentally-oriented program. Once parents understood the value of these practices for their children, their support has also been strong.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results shown in the graph for Cluster III indicate a high degree of importance attached to communication and board support. Other elements of community partnerships also are considered to be very important, but somewhat less so. Application ratings indicate that South Colby is viewed as being mostly to completely successful in maintaining regular communication in and out of the school but partial success in achieving contributions from community members and board support. Ratings for comprehensive case management and community representation in decision-making indicate slight to partial levels.

Cluster III: Community Partnerships
South Colby School



f. Barriers?

The most obvious barrier to developing community partnerships is the amount of time it takes to make contacts and develop relationships. South Colby's volunteer coordinator has been particularly helpful in this regard and the new alliances with naval personnel hold promise for the future.

South Colby's greatest challenge lies in the area of coordinated educational and social services for families.

8. School-based preschool-to-school transition services

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

The South Kitsap School District does not provide nor coordinate preschool programs beyond intervention services offered for developmentally delayed children.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

The preschool intervention staff and South Colby's staff share information and inservice training opportunities. Informal communication also occurs between preschool providers in the area (whose own children attend South Colby) and school staff (who have children in preschool programs).

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

Both the preschool intervention program and district kindergartens follow district guidelines for curriculum. But kindergarten programs vary throughout the South Kitsap School District so communication and coordination depends on which school the preschoolers will attend. For South Colby, most of the coordination happens on an individualized basis.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

South Colby is one of only two schools in the district that houses a before and after school child care program. This program is operated through the YMCA. At present, there is little coordination between South Colby's staff and the child care staff.

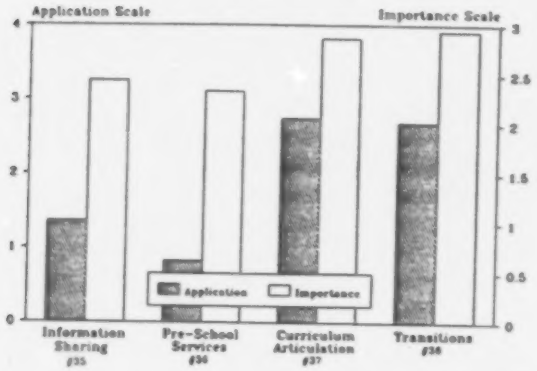
e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

South Colby publishes a handbook for parents of children entering kindergarten. Children and parents are invited to visit the classrooms. Parents are invited to orientation sessions. Since multi-age classrooms allow children to remain with the same teacher and group for several years, anxiety over transitions from grade level to grade level is greatly reduced.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results shown in the graph for Cluster IV indicate that providing transition services and curriculum articulation between levels are considered to be very important with coordination of preschool services and information sharing between preschool and school personnel being somewhat less important. Application ratings indicate partial adoption of the former two practices but only slight provision for the latter two items.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
South Colby School



g. Barriers?

Working with preschool providers requires a larger investment of time than the staff at South Colby has had available in the past. Time to make contacts, to follow through, and to coordinate services continues to be at a premium.

TENDOY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
POCATELLO, IDAHO

PROFILE

Population characteristics

Tendoy Elementary serves approximately 372 students in a K-6 school. Families are from an urban, middle to low income background with about 30% of the students receiving free or reduced lunches. Approximately 90% of the children are Caucasian with the remaining 10% divided among Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans. School attendance is high, averaging 98% during the 1991-92 school year.

Description of involvement in early childhood: history, process

Impetus for shifting to a more developmental program came from a 20 year veteran kindergarten teacher who had become very actively involved in early childhood movement. Supported by this teacher, Julie Van Osdol, the local AEYC, a district commitment to the Onward to Excellence Program, and the elementary coordinator, the school staff began to evaluate the curriculum to assess how it meshed with developmentally appropriate practices. This grew out of a concern over using grade retention for children who weren't progressing. The staff decided to develop a more innovative and effective reading program and work towards early identification of at-risk children.

Goals of EC Project

1. Move the first grade to a more developmental, less structured program that includes thematic units, an integrated language curriculum and learning centers

2. Develop alternatives to using grade retention as a way of insuring student progress

3. Develop the manipulative component of the math program for the 3rd - 6th grades to insure that all new math concepts will be taught using manipulative materials

COMPONENTS

1. **Classroom curriculum**

a. **How have classroom practices been adapted to reflect both the age and the individual needs of the children?**

The kindergarten emphasizes free choice among interest centers, including a library, housekeeping, blocks, music, art, and science areas. Centers are stocked with books and materials appropriate to the children's age and interest. Children work with a variety of manipulative and open-ended materials that promote learning through exploration and discovery. Similar developmentally appropriate practices are being implemented at other primary grade levels.

In 1992-93, in connection with the Onward To Excellence program, math instruction was reviewed to insure that developmentally appropriate teaching strategies were used at each grade level. As a result, math manipulatives are being used school-wide and all new math concepts are introduced using these materials.

b. What opportunities are there for planning and implementing an integrated curriculum based on themes and projects?

Dr. Sally Peña, from Idaho State University, has served as a resource consultant on integrated curriculum and Tendoy is a practicum center for ISU early childhood education students. In the early stages of the project, themes were used to integrate learning in kindergarten and to a smaller extent, in the first grade. Since that time, the curriculum for the entire primary has been thematically integrated using a whole language approach. Both primary and intermediate classes often approach the same topic from differing levels of complexity with subjects tied together. Themes are often selected from science and social studies areas.

c. How are children actively involved in learning and decision-making?

In kindergarten, children choose their own activities at a variety of learning centers, but as the year progresses, some teacher-directed work is added. Throughout the primary grades, a combination of learning centers and teacher-directed activities affords children opportunities to make active decisions about their own learning.

d. How have language and literacy elements been emphasized?

While in the beginning, children were taught reading according to their skill level, with extensive use of readers and workbooks, Tendoy has now adopted an integrated language model. This move was aided by district adoption of a MacMillan reading series that includes many trade books in addition to a textbook. The series also offers an integrated writing and spelling component. Tendoy blends these elements into the thematically organized curriculum throughout the primary grades.

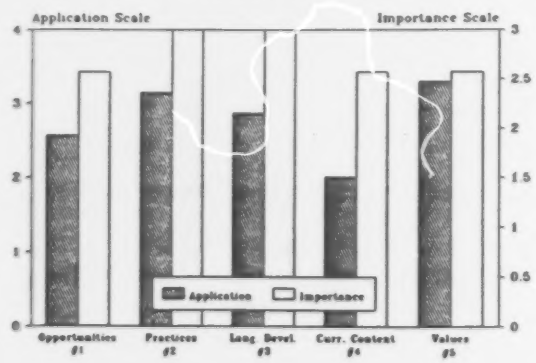
e. What, if anything, does the school do about gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials?

The recently adopted Macmillan materials have a multi-cultural orientation. In addition, Tendoy recognizes the need to insure gender and cultural appropriateness of practices and materials and, along with a group of interested parents, will be focusing on this during the coming year.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Survey results indicate the highest degree of importance being attached to the use of developmentally appropriate practices and language and literacy skills, as shown in the graph for Cluster IA. Other elements of the curriculum cluster are also considered to be important. Application ratings indicate that developmentally appropriate practices and anti-bias values are rated as mostly descriptive of the Tendoy program. However, ratings suggest only partial success in giving children opportunities to make decisions and in integrating the curriculum content.

Cluster IA: Curriculum
Tendoy School



g. Barriers?

When the staff at Tendoy first began to discuss make changes, there was not a strong consciousness about developmentally appropriate practices in the central office, and curriculum changes in that direction had to be constantly explained and defended. Since that time, a new elementary education specialist has been hired who is both knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practices and supportive of curriculum innovations. Staff at Tendoy are at different levels both of understanding and of being comfortable with the use of a developmentally appropriate program.

Some concern has been voiced over multi-cultural and gender awareness, and inclusion of cultural diversity in the curriculum. In the coming year, the staff and the PTA will be gathering information and working toward some definitions to address this issue.

2. <u>School context</u>

a. How have classrooms been structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds?

While initially children were grouped according to ability levels, Tendoy now mixes children heterogeneously at each grade level. Children with special needs are handled about half and half, through a pull-out program that is conducted in a resource room, and through services supplied within the home classroom.

b. What opportunities are there for children of differing ages to learn together?

Tendoy uses cross-age tutoring. A "buddy" system pairs children in upper and lower grades. For example, 6th graders tutors help 1st graders with reading. In addition, primary and intermediate classes have regular exchanges organized around themes. When classes are studying butterflies, for example, primary and intermediate classes share what they have learned with each other. Tendoy also has a mentoring program that pairs high school students with intermediate grade children.

c. How are caring relationships among school personnel, children and family members established and maintained?

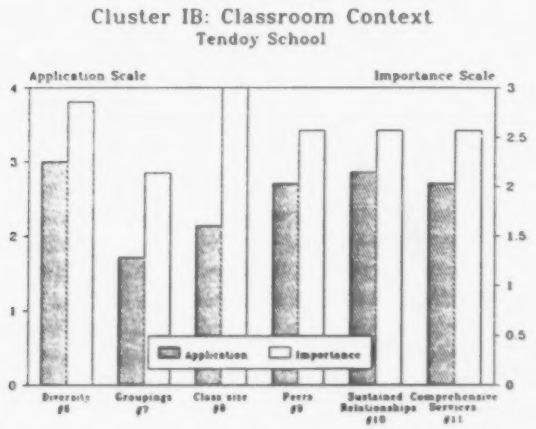
"Parents are surprised by how much teachers really do care about each individual child and his or her progress," exclaims Judy Thomas, the principal at Tendoy School. This strong spirit of caring and warmth is evidenced by the pride with which children's work is displayed throughout the school and an open policy that encourages families to visit school at any time. And when there are openings on the staff, individuals are hired who fit this same kind of mold and have a genuine love for children. Tendoy's relatively small size (approximately 350 students) helps, as Thomas notes, since everyone gets to know each other and can take care of each other.

d. What support services are available to children and their families?

Regular health screening services including a fluoride mouth rinsing program to prevent dental decay are available at school. Other health and welfare services are provided where needed. An Idaho State University Counseling Mentor Program provides counseling services for children in 1st - 6th grades. Specialized counseling is also available for children whose parents have chemical dependency problems.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster IB, class size is rated as very important to achieving desired outcomes for children. Other elements such as diversity within the classroom, learning with a broad range of peers, sustained relationships, and comprehensive services for children are also considered to be important. Ratings give somewhat less importance to mixed-age groups. Application ratings indicate the program has been mostly successful at incorporating these elements into the school context. However, ratings suggest only partial success in giving children opportunities to interact in mixed-age groupings and in keeping class size to a level that fosters desired outcomes.



f. Barriers?

There is interest in establishing blended classrooms. But at present, the lack of a curriculum that is supportive of children of various ages learning together is a barrier to implementation.

3. <u>Assessment and outcomes</u>

a. What opportunities are there for children to participate in assessment of their own progress?

Until now, there have been few formal opportunities for children to participate in assessment of their own progress. During the coming year, however, as Tendoy extends portfolio assessment school-wide, children will become involved in talking about their work and making decisions on what to include and exclude in their portfolios. Then students will participate in student-parent-teacher conferences. Two teachers successfully piloted this process, prior to its adoption school-wide.

b. What opportunities are there for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress?

Parents complete an observation form in connection kindergarten screening using the Early Prevention of School Failure program. As children progress through school, Friday homework focusing on math is routinely given, and parents are asked to sign off to show that they have reviewed their student's efforts.

In the past, parents and teachers have discussed portfolios of kindergarten student's work. Beginning this year, these discussions will take place at all grade levels.

c. How are expectations established to insure that each child experiences success and accomplishment?

Teachers establish expectations for individual children on an informal basis. Currently, the school is examining "continuous progress" approaches to curriculum and assessment that would insure each child experiencing success.

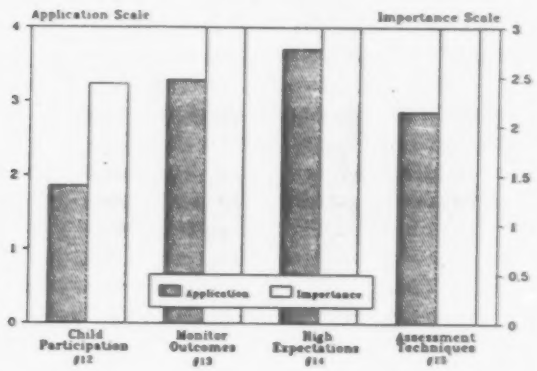
d. What assessment techniques are used to monitor each child's progress on a regular basis?

Tendoy uses a nine-week reporting system to monitor children's progress. Criterion referenced testing in language arts and math is used in 1st - 6th grades. Standardized tests (ITBS) are given in sixth grade. Teachers also use textbooks tests, observation, and informal evaluation. Portfolios of children's work are assembled. The Early Prevention of School Failure (EPSF) is to screen kindergarten children and to plan sequential programs for each child to develop basic skills.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in Cluster IC, all items relating to assessment and outcomes are considered to be of the highest importance, with the exception of children's participation. Application ratings indicate that the staff at Tendoy perceives themselves as consistently successful in establishing high expectations for children and mostly able to monitor desired outcomes and use appropriate assessment techniques. But they recognize only a slight to partial incorporation of children into assessment procedures.

Cluster IC: Assessment and Outcomes
Tendoy School



f. Barriers?

Tendoy is moving from assessment by product to assessment by progress. Teachers are finding it a challenge to explain children's progress to parents when developmentally appropriate techniques are used to measure change.

4. <u>Staff development and participation</u>

a. Have staff been involved in the development of a mission and philosophy statement?

A self-study process has involved all staff. Staff was first surveyed on early childhood priorities and end-of-the-year expectations. A common definition of developmentally appropriate practices was developed. A committee developed a mission statement, distributed it to staff for input, and then adopted it at a general faculty meeting.

The mission statement emphasizes three elements: (a) importance of a whole child approach, (b) education as a collaborative effort among families, school personnel, and the community, and (c) child empowerment for active learning.

b. What inservice training opportunities for staff members occur on developmentally appropriate practices?

Inservice activities held at Tendoy have focused on the use of manipulatives to teach math. Classes on theory and applications in early childhood education have been offered several times. In addition, staff members are sent to conferences and workshops, then they return and report to others. For example, teachers visited classrooms using developmentally appropriate practices while attending a NWREL transitions conference. A teacher from a cross-graded 2nd - 4th classroom in another school was invited to visit Tendoy and spoke to the staff. In addition, staff members have visited every school in Idaho containing a mixed age classroom.

c. What opportunities are there for staff members to work together and collaborate?

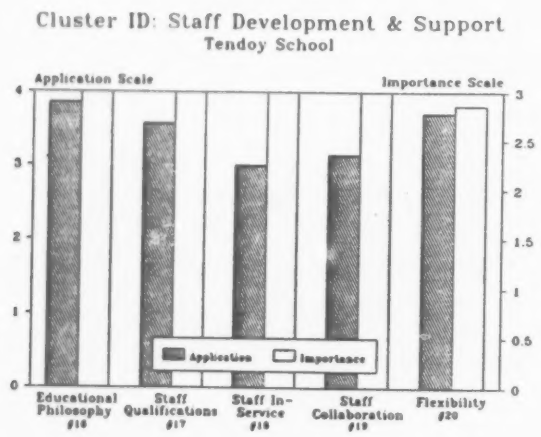
Teachers from primary grades meet twice a month to discuss early childhood practices and plan for implementation. In the past, teachers have collaborated on an integrated science and math curriculum. Teachers have shared ideas and materials and have observed each other's classroom practices. New opportunities for collaboration have emerged this year, as the district has made money for substitutes available so staff will have release time to collaborate and develop an integrated whole language curriculum.

d. How do staff members show their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches?

Change has been slow due to state and regulations, but teachers are motivated and have been working on plans for change within the parameters set by the district. The principal, Judy Thomas, notes, "We wouldn't be this far if it weren't for teacher flexibility and willingn_ss to change."

e. Self-diagnostic survey

All aspects of the staff development and support group are considered to be very important to the success of the early childhood program, as depicted in the graph for Cluster ID. Similarly, application ratings are also high, indicating that Tendoy is very successful at providing this type of assistance for innovation.



f. Barriers?

In the past, the greatest barrier to staff development has been time with appropriate compensation for teachers to consider and discuss ways of putting philosophy into practice. The principal had expressed her fear of losing focus and momentum without this resource. But with new district support for a whole language curriculum, additional financial resources have been made available for training and staff development.

5. Support structures

a. What opportunities are there for decision-making directly at the site?

Opportunities to make school decision on-site are increasing. The major problem facing the Tendoy staff is to ascertain those decisions which can be made at the site. Curriculum decisions are beginning to be made through committee work. School committees always include those staff members who will be affected by decisions.

b. How are performance evaluations conducted?

A clinical supervision model is used to conduct performance evaluations approximately three times during the school year. The process includes a pre- conference, a formal script-tape observation of a lesson conducted by the teacher, a post-conference to review what went right and what could have been improved, and a written summary. From the evaluation information, each teacher sets personal goals, and writes up objectives and activities for meeting those goals.

c. What resources have been available?

Idaho State University staff have provided training on an integrated language arts program. The kindergarten teacher, Julie Van Osdol, and the local AEYC have offered philosophical input on developmental programs and have been very supportive. From Idaho State University, students at every level of training participate in Tendoy's classrooms. Student participation is not only an important resource but has encouraged examination and discussion among staff of developmental practices. Involvement in the Onward to Excellence program has provided important resources and information.

d. What time resources were allocated for planning, collaboration, and program implementation?

During the early stages of the program, intermediate and primary teachers gained important planning time by exchange by buddying up and covering each other's classes. Faculty meetings have been restructured to insure that the best use is made of allocated time.

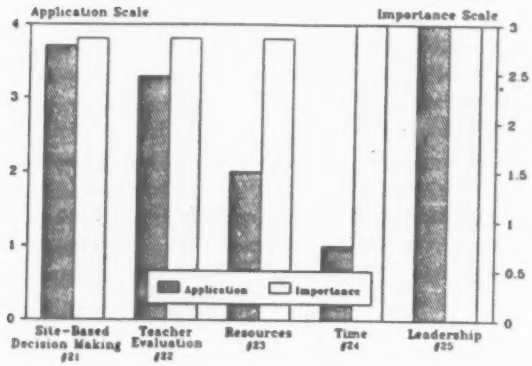
e. What kind of leadership is there for program implementation?

Interest in pursuing a developmental program began with the commitment of a kindergarten teacher and soon spilled over to staff. The leadership of Principal Judy Thomas has been instrumental in helping staff gather information and develop awareness of what is involved in developmentally appropriate practices. Support and information has also come from Idaho State University faculty.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

As shown in the graph for Cluster IE, all aspects of school structures are rated as very important to the early childhood program. Application ratings show a mixed pattern. Leadership is rated as being exceptionally strong. Site-based decision-making is also seen as a program strength with teacher evaluation standards mostly consistent with a developmental philosophy. However, ratings suggest that resources are only partially adequate to achieve desired changes and that staff rate less success in allocating adequate amounts of time for planning and implementation of innovations.

Cluster IE: School Structures
Tendoy School



g. Barriers?

In the early stages of the project, there was no release time for faculty to work together to design innovations. This barrier was minimized when funds for substitute teachers were made available by the district this year. Staff were then able to plan and implement an integrated whole language curriculum.

6. <u>Family involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for families to contribute to curriculum design and implementation?

Through Tendoy's Parent Advisory Committee, parents have an opportunity to review and discuss curriculum design and innovations. In addition, the PTA distributes a questionnaire and collects information on parent interests and talents. Teachers then recruit parents to help with curriculum implementation in these areas.

b. How are families involved in children's education at school?

Tendoy has a very active PTA and even working parents are involved, either coming to meetings or sending refreshments. The PTA has chosen to divide their work load into small segments so everyone can be involved at a comfortable level. Many parents volunteer in the classroom. A monthly newsletter and calendar is sent home with students. Twice a year, a student council newsletter is sent home. Teachers phone regularly and send certificates of achievement.

Parent evenings are planned to focus on particular topics. For example, on one parent night, developmentally appropriate practices for math education were discussed and parents made math games for home use . A recent parent meeting focused on the development of school-family partnerships. Responsibilities of the school and of the family in supporting children's learning were discussed and a "contract" was set out outlining expectations. Included as family responsibilities were items as limiting TV viewing, helping children to follow through on homework assignments, and recognizing and supporting strengths while at the same time backing away from the child's weaknesses.

c. How are families supported through education and comprehensive services?

A section on parenting is provided in the school library. In the coming year, the PTA has planned a number of meetings focused on parenting issues, including conflict resolution and anti-bias practices. A list for referrals to heath and social services is kept at the school.

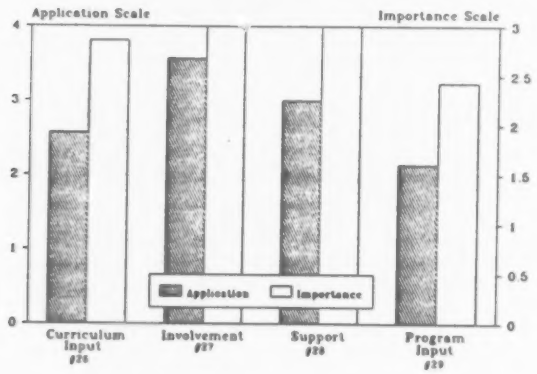
d. What decision making opportunities are there for families?

Tendoy has a Parent Advisory Committee. Although not a decision-making body, the committee provides a forum for parents to speak up and both challenge and praise school practices.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Parent involvement and family support services are rated uniformly as being very important to the formation of partnerships with families, as shown in the graph for Cluster II. Actual parent input into the curriculum and program decision-making is seen as somewhat less important. Application ratings indicate the staff's perception of strength in parent involvement and ability to provide support to families. But ratings also suggest that parent involvement in curriculum and program decision-making is only slight to partial.

Cluster II: Partnerships with Families
Tendoy School



f. Barriers?

As parents have limited time for volunteering, a continuing challenge is to find ways where they can be involved in what time they do have available.

7. <u>Community involvement and support</u>

a. What opportunities are there for community agencies and institutions to be linked collaboratively into a comprehensive and accessible network of resources?

ISU Extension services has a Youth at Risk Committee that joins social service agencies together, and the school district is represented in this group. Health and welfare services are tied together and referrals can be made for Tendoy families in need.

b. What opportunities exist for a broad and representative group of community members to participate in school decision-making?

Actual decision-making is done at the level of the school board, whose membership is made up of community representatives. In more of an advisory capacity, there are many health-related and youth-at-risk groups where community members and school officials work collaboratively to seek solutions. In particular, a gang task force has been instrumental in providing training for school administrators.

c. How do community members contribute ideas, resources and time to the school?

Bannoch Home, a shelter, provides a staff visit once a week for counseling children who have parents with chemical dependency problems. High school students participate as mentors and buddies through their service club. Students from ISU participate at Tendoy in a variety of roles and supervising professors offer inservice training. A volunteer coordinator for the district recruits volunteers for Tendoy from community members who are neighborhood residents.

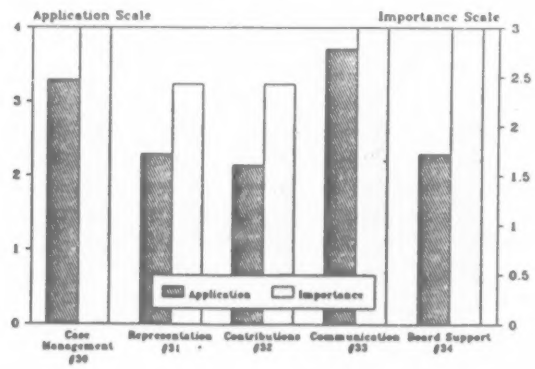
d. What community support exists for school efforts?

Members of the school board are interested in developmental programs. The school board is extremely supportive of Tendoy's involvement in the Onward to Excellence program.

e. Self-diagnostic survey

Elements of community partnerships that are viewed as very important to school efforts include an integrated case management system with human service providers, communication with the community, and board support as shown in the graph for Cluster III. Community representation in school decision-making and contributions to the program are seen as somewhat less important. While application ratings show maintenance of communication lines and an integrated case management system to be strong elements of the Tendoy program, board support is rated less highly. Also rated as only partial elements of the Tendoy program are community representation in decision-making and contributions to the school.

Cluster III: Community Partnerships
Tendoy School



f. Barriers?

Time to develop community partnerships is always a premium but through its relationship with Idaho State University and with other community groups, Tendoy has developed strong ties to the community.

8. School-based preschool-to-school transition services

a. What commitment is made by the school to provide preschool services (on-site or through collaboration and support of community providers)?

The district provides a special needs preschool for three to five year old children who are developmentally delayed. Although the district is supportive of preschool education in general, having classrooms for younger children at Tendoy is not under consideration.

b. What opportunities are there for preschool providers and school staff to share information and inservice training?

Tendoy, Head Start, and the special needs preschool staff share information about children and do joint case management. Preschool teachers are invited to inservice training at Tendoy. Representatives from all three institutions are involved on an administrative council and participate in the local principals' group.

c. How is curriculum coordinated between preschool and school programs?

The district has set guidelines for preschool and kindergarten curriculum that follow developmentally appropriate practices. Private preschools follow these guidelines and curriculum is coordinated in this fashion.

d. How is comprehensive child care coordinated?

ISU Extension Services offers an after school program, "After School Adventures," at Tendoy School. Fees are established on a sliding scale basis. Currently, 24 students are enrolled, 18 of whom are from Tendoy. Although there is no formal program for early care, Tendoy opens for breakfast at 8 a.m. Approximately 50 to 60 students have breakfast at school. Staff is not officially on duty after breakfast, but children can spend time in the library, computer lab, or go outside to play until school starts at 8:30 a.m.

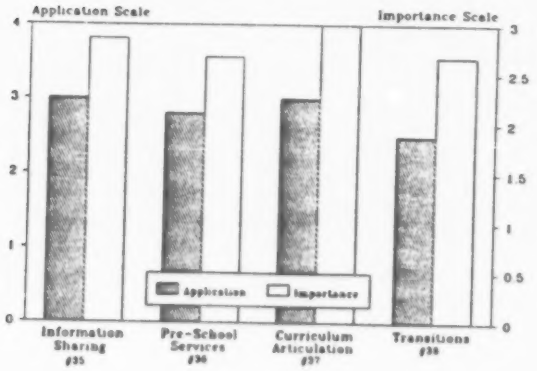
e. How do school staff ease transitions into and across school levels for both children and families?

Transitions are handled by first having professional teams meet to share information. Staff meet with parents in the spring to explain the program, then children have several opportunities to visit. Currently, several students from Head Start are in the kindergarten and are part of the Idaho Transition Project. These students and their families will receive special attention from a project worker to ease the transition to the primary grades and to help them access any necessary human services.

f. Self-diagnostic survey

Transition practices are viewed as very important to the success of the program, as shown in the graph for Cluster IV. Application ratings indicate that most of these elements are present to some degree in the Tendoy program. Assisting families in making transition into, through, and out of the primary program is viewed as being somewhat less applicable at Tendoy.

Cluster IV: Transition Practices
Tendoy School



g. Barriers?

Finding time to coordinate with preschool providers presents barriers in establishing more comprehensive transition services.

Appendix B

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
School-Based Early Childhood Centers
Self Diagnostic Survey

School Name _____ Date _____

Role in relation to school:

- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Classroom Staff
- ☐ Parent/Volunteer
- ☐ Other

Age level you work with in relation to school:

- ☐ Pre-primary (0-5)
- ☐ Primary (6-8 yrs.)
- ☐ Intermediate (9-12 yrs.)
- ☐ Other _____

Rate each item in two ways:

In our school:
A = Applies Completely
B = Applies Mostly
C = Applies Partly
D = Applies Slightly
E = Does Not Apply
F = Don't Know

I believe this is:
1 = Very Important
2 = Somewhat Important
3 = Not Important

		A	B	C	D	E	F	1	2	3
In this school. . . .										
1.	Children have opportunities to make and act on significant decisions regarding classroom and school life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	Classroom and school practices are adapted according to the age- and individually appropriate needs of the children.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	Classrooms have a strong emphasis on language development and the successful emergence of literacy skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Curriculum content is integrated and learning activities are thematically related.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	Cultural diversity and nonsexist values are consistently reflected in a variety of age appropriate materials and activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	The special and diverse needs of all children, including those with disabilities, are responded to within the "regular" classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	Class groupings afford children regular opportunities to interact in mixed-age groupings consistently over time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rate each item in two ways:

In our school:
A = Applies Completely
B = Applies Mostly
C = Applies Partly
D = Applies Slightly
E = Does Not Apply
F = Don't Know

I believe this is:
1 = Very Important
2 = Somewhat Important
3 = Not Important

		A	B	C	D	E	F	1	2	3
8.	Classes are appropriately sized with an age-appropriate adult-child ratio for fostering the outcomes identified by our school community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	Classrooms use inclusive groupings and afford all children in our school regular opportunities to work with a broad range of peers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	We provide opportunities for continuity of caring relationships between and among children and adults which are sustained for more than one school year.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	We offer comprehensive services to children, including provisions and support for their health, nutrition, safety, and extended care needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	Children actively participate in and reflect on assessment practices related to their school progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	We identify and monitor the progress of children towards desired, clearly identified outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	Our desired outcomes are designed to set high expectations for every child in our school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	Staff utilize a variety of assessment techniques which are based on clearly stated goals/outcomes and which provide a balanced, holistic and authentic understanding of each child's progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rate each item in two ways:

In our school:
A = Applies Completely
B = Applies Mostly
C = Applies Partly
D = Applies Slightly
E = Does Not Apply
F = Don't Know

I believe this is:
1 = Very Important
2 = Somewhat Important
3 = Not Important

		A	B	C	D	E	F	1	2	3
16.	We use and periodically refine a written statement regarding our educational philosophy, which includes information about our shared values and expectations about the school's purpose, function, and the range of acceptable practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	School staff working with children up through the age of eight have demonstrated professional qualifications (training and experience) in the field of early childhood development and education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	Ongoing and diverse opportunities for staff inservice regarding early childhood education and development are consistently available.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	Opportunities for collaboration among school staff to develop and broaden expertise in the field of early childhood education are offered regularly every year.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	School staff exercise professional flexibility and are willing to attempt to change their practice when appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	Staff participate in site-based decisionmaking regarding program components which will have an effect on their classroom practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	Standards for teacher evaluations are consistent with the goals, philosophy and identified practices being implemented.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	We have adequate resources for making the changes needed in our program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	We have time to prepare for and implement desired innovations in our school practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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		A	B	C	D	E	F	1	2	3
25.	Leadership processes in our school are strong and supportive of the effort we are making to provide high quality service to children and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.	Family and community members have regular and meaningful opportunities to contribute ideas and resources to classroom curriculum content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27.	Family members are expected and encouraged to become involved in their child(ren)'s education at school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.	We offer comprehensive support to families through parent education, family support services, and linkages to needed human services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.	Broad-based decision-making opportunities are afforded to families to contribute to program design and operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.	Collaborative relationships exist with other human service providers and our school participates in integrative "case management" efforts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.	We actively solicit broad and representative participation in school decision-making from community members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32.	Community members contribute ideas, resources and time to school and classroom processes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.	Frequent and regular communication flow into and out of the school is maintained.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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34.	We have the support from the school board and the community to make changes which the school community identifies as being needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.	Established relationships encourage sharing of information and professional development opportunities between school staff and preschool service providers sending children into the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36.	We play an active role in providing and/or supporting the provision of preschool services to the preschoolers who will enter our primary program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37.	School staff work collaboratively across age levels to articulate curriculum processes and ease transitions for children in developmentally appropriate ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38.	School staff assist families in making transitions into, through, and out of the primary program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX C

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
IA. Classroom Curriculum						
Classroom practices reflect both the age and individual needs of children	Applying	Applying	Applying	Developing	Applying	Developing
Curriculum content is integrated and learning activities thematically related	Developing	Applying	Applying	Developing	Applying	Developing
Children actively involved in learning and decision-making	Applying	Applying	Developing	Applying	Applying	Applying
Strong emphasis on language development and the successful emergence of literacy skills	Applying	Applying	Applying	Developing	Applying	Developing
Gender and culturally appropriate materials and practices	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
IB. School Context						
Classrooms structured to include children of differing abilities and backgrounds	Applying	Applying	Applying	Applying	Applying	Applying
Opportunities for children of differing ages to learn together	Developing	Applying	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Continuity of caring relationships among children and adults sustained for more than one school year	Emerging	Applying	Emerging	Emerging	Applying	Emerging
School support services for children and families	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
IC. Assessment & Outcomes						
Opportunities for children to participate in assessment of own progress	Developing	Developing	Applying	Developing	Applying	Developing
Opportunities for parents to participate in assessment of children's progress	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Expectations established, to insure each child experiences success and accomplishment	Developing	Emerging	Developing	Emerging	Emerging	Emerging
Authentic assessment techniques used to monitor each child's progress on regular basis	Developing	Applying	Developing	Emerging	Developing	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
ID. Staff Development and Participation						
Staff involved in development of mission and philosophy statement	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Consistent opportunities for inservice on developmentally appropriate practices	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Opportunities for staff members to work together and collaborate	Applying	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Staff flexible and willing to try new approaches	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
IE. Support Structures						
Opportunities for site-based decision-making	Applying	Applying	Developing	Emerging	Applying	Emerging
Standards for performance evaluations supportive of developmentally appropriate practices	Applying	Applying	Applying	Applying	Developing	Developing
Adequate resources for making needed changes	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Adequate time for planning, collaboration, and implementation	Developing	Developing	Applying	Emerging	Developing	Emerging
Supportive leadership for innovations	Applying	Developing	Developing	Developing	Applying	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
II. Family Involvement and Support						
Opportunities for families to contribute to curriculum design & implementation	Developing	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Emerging
Family involvement in children's education at school	Developing	Developing	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing
Families supported through education and comprehensive services	Developing	Developing	Emerging	Developing	Emerging	Emerging
Decision-making opportunities for families	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Emerging	Developing	Emerging

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
III. Community Involvement and Support						
Community agencies and institutions linked into accessible network of resources	Developing	Developing	Developing	Emerging	Emerging	Applying
Opportunities for community members to participate in school decision-making	Developing	Developing	Applying	Applying	Emerging	Emerging
Community members contribute ideas, resources, and time to school	Emerging	Developing	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Applying
School board and community supportive of changes	Applying	Emerging	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing

Analysis of Components by Site

Component	Centennial	Mary Harrison	Nome	Ponderosa	South Colby	Tendoy
IV. School-based Preschool-to-School Transition Services						
Provision of preschool services on-site or in collaboration with providers	Applying	Applying	Applying	Applying	Emerging	Emerging
Preschool providers and school staff share information and inservice training	Applying	Applying	Applying	Emerging	Developing	Developing
Curriculum coordinated across preschool and school programs	Applying	Developing	Applying	Developing	Emerging	Emerging
Comprehensive child care coordinated through school	Applying	Applying	Developing	Emerging	Applying	Developing
School staff assist children and families in making transitions into and across school levels	Developing	Applying	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing